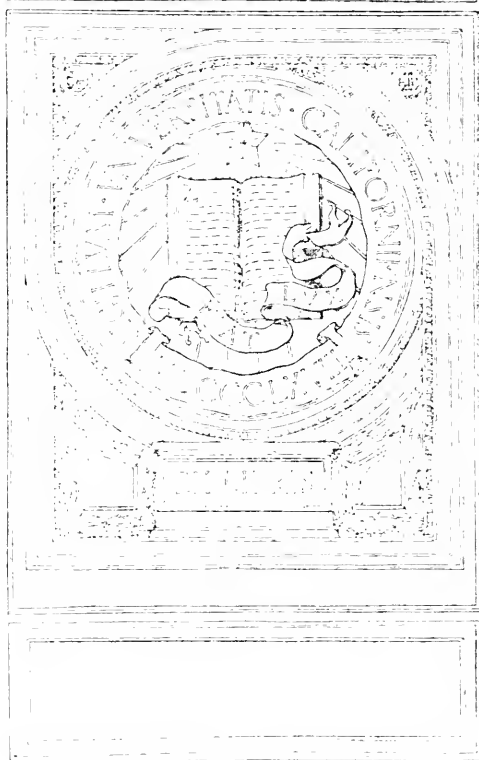


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**AN INQUIRY**  
**INTO**  
**THE WORKHOUSE SYSTEM**  
**AND THE**  
**LAW OF MAINTENANCE**  
**IN**  
**AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS.**

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*Barker and Kimbrock, Printers,  
Norwich.*

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**BY REV. C. D. BRERETON, A.M.**

**RECTOR OF LITTLE MASSINGHAM, NORFOLK.**

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## PREFACE.

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*To avoid a continual reference to authorities, it may be sufficient to state that I am principally indebted to the following :—The Statute Book, the Journals, Debates and Reports of Parliament, Sir F. Eden's History of the Poor, Dr. Burn's History of the Poor Laws, a considerable list of original Tracts, and to many Gentlemen connected with the administration of the Laws and with Agriculture in this County.*

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CHAPTER 4.—Facts illustrative of the Workhouse System and of the Law of Maintenance in Agricultural Districts.

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## ERRATA.

- P. 23—for *admit* read *admits*.  
26—for *Les Sœurs* read *Les Sœurs*.  
51—for *modification* read *modifications*.  
54—for *Beccles* read *Bucks*.  
70—for *guardians* read *guardian*.  
74—for *workhouses* read *workhouse*—(in the note).  
for *diende* read *deinde*—(in the note).

## CHAPTER I.

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### OPINIONS.

**T**HE management of the poor in the agricultural districts of England is conducted in some cases by a parochial court, in others by workhouses, and houses of industry, in others by what may be called the allowance system, i. e. by a scale of maintenance fixed by the local magistracy, and in others by an union of some or all of these schemes. On the allowance system, I ventured to submit to the public in the spring of last year, some observations, which my own experience in an agricultural village had suggested, and which appeared to throw some new light upon that particular scheme. The chief design of those observations was to prove, by a practical inquiry, that such a system was not only impolitic, and mischievous, but altogether uncalled for by the circumstances of the case, and that the plea of necessity on which it was sometimes defended, was completely without foundation.

In the following pages it is my design, in pursuit of the same object, to offer some observations on the workhouse and incorporating system, as applied to agricultural districts. I confine my in-

quiry to a special point, and derive my information chiefly from a particular province, because the poor law system is so complicated, and the evidence collected from different parts of the country so various, and cumbersome, that in order to arrive at any satisfactory judgment of the whole, it is almost necessary to form some minor and separate judgments on the evidence supplied by the different departments. The advantages of this mode of proceeding are manifest—the evidence supplied, though less comprehensive, is more clear, popular, and decisive; and by a successive disclosure of evidence, the attention of the parties most nearly interested is awakened.

It is a difficult task to touch prejudices in favour of fashions, and customs, however wild, extravagant, or fantastical they may be. There is a great disposition in mankind, especially as what is called civilization advances, to have recourse to all manner of artificial modes, and to treat as obsolete whatever is simple and natural. If any improvement be contemplated in society, it must be introduced, and veiled under the cover of a new fashion, an invention, and a scheme to save trouble. Sometimes, however, the extravagance of our hair-dressers and tailors, in deforming our persons, affords a favourable opportunity for chastising the vanity and regulating the taste of the public. The same advantage may be, and has been taken of extravagance in religion, and even in legislation. The same oppor-

tunity is unquestionably now presented by the various fashions and whimsies which have been introduced into the modern system of managing the poor. I am not competent, nor inclined to make the most of this opportunity, but if in the following pages, I appear, on some occasions, to represent the schemes of wise and good men, and even the laws, which have sanctioned them in an absurd and ludicrous light, my apology is, that I believe them to be as immoral as they are absurd. Many things that are untrue and mischievous are best refuted by shewing their absurdity. It is a mode of reasoning adopted even in abstract sciences, and has been employed in every age in favour of religion, good policy, and good morals. An apposite illustration of this remark is afforded by the reformation of the church of England from the errors of the church of Rome. Popery was religion, the Christian religion, though in a corrupted form, and Popery therefore, as a form of the Christian religion, and as having encouraged many virtues and much piety, deserved respect. But Popery nourished great errors, and the wisest, and the most candid, as well as the most eager of the reformers, exposed the absurdities of the church of Rome. Latimer by his intrepid wit, Jewel by his learned pleading, and Chillingworth by his candid disputations, stormed and carried the strong holds of Popery, the infallibility of his Holiness, the damnable sin of *doubting*, and the still more damnable sin of

*thinking.* These captains of the reformation did not, however, at the same time hesitate to sweep away the petty fortifications, and to hold up to merited contempt the false miracles, legends, ceremonies, and ridiculous observances of the Romish hierarchy.

Popery was a corruption of the Christian religion, and pauperism (in the modern and English sense of the term) is a corruption of charity, the essence and the ornament of that religion. It may be necessary, therefore, to examine the legends, canons, and pious frauds of pauperism, in order to shew the nature of that moral and political superstition which has overspread the land. Whether I fail or succeed in establishing, by adequate proof, my suspicion of pauperism, yet viewing it as an imposture, a counterfeit, and a national hypocrisy, I may be excused, if I apply a language and an argument, which would not properly apply to a homily, on genuine charity. My readers, however, without any prefatory hints or remarks of mine, will not fail to distinguish between the virtue and the counterfeit, or at least, between the original law and the subsequent pile of oppressive statutes which have overladen and crushed it.

The evidence which has been collected by the committees of the houses of parliament, relating to the workhouse system, and especially to that part of it connected with agricultural districts, has hitherto been scanty and inconclusive. There are

indeed some important particulars stated in some of the reports, and especially in one of the house of Lords, but they are desultory and unconnected with any decided inferences. Information therefore is wanted on this particular point. But on this and on every branch of the poor laws, it is open discussion, as well as information, which is now required. Even the information has been too much confined to the private proceedings and reports of select committees. The parliament of England is a popular assembly, and it has been considered that whatever laws have once been passed respecting the poor, must be popular, however cruel they may have been in their original construction, or however perverted in their administration. To propose their amendment or repeal has been considered as impolitic, if not as hazardous, as it was in a certain ancient democracy (where it was a capital offence) to propose the diversion of a popular theatrical fund to any more useful purpose. There is, however, a very strong suspicion in the country respecting the charitable nature of these institutions.—People, common people, begin to think as they never have been accustomed to think of this question, and, ere long, the lovers of liberty and the lovers of applause must change their language and their rhetoric on this philanthropic subject.

The extent to which the present system of administering the poor laws has been carried, especially in agricultural districts, is by general

confession, acknowledged to be most mischievous. There are a few individuals, who still think it perfect, but the prevailing opinion undoubtedly is, that there is in it much infirmity and imperfection. So far as the administration is concerned, it is impossible to exculpate the administrators, where they have by an indiscreet and ill-understood exercise of power transgressed the boundaries of reason and of law. The investigation of this subject must, however, be carried still higher. If the legislature has not given its full sanction to all the practices, which prevail, it has by official recommendations, and even by express acts of parliament, introduced the erroneous principles from which the mischief has followed. To the parliament of England therefore, that "fountain of law, and fence of liberty," this subject must be ultimately referred. Though the administrators in various departments, may under the influence of a sudden panic, or of more enlightened views, check and mitigate the disease; though the disease itself may under the present healthy state of our political atmosphere be staid in its progress, yet the cure, or effectual restriction of it can only be effected by a change of the laws themselves, or at least by some formal renunciation of those principles, which do appear to have received the recognition of the legislature, and the practical sanction of the courts of law in modern times.

The strictest silence, amounting almost to Eleu-



sinian, has hitherto been enjoined upon this matter. Reports, evidence, legislative remedies have been permitted, but discussion upon such a serious and even mysterious subject, would be the height of presumption, inhumanity, and impolicy. To discuss the matter on its own merits is quite unpardonable, but if you have a legislative scheme, a select vestry act, or a workhouse system, or a labour rate plan, you shall be admitted among the initiated, and enrolled with the benefactors of your country.

A great change has commenced in the public opinion, and especially in the opinion of practical men, respecting the necessity and expediency of workhouses and incorporated houses of industry. Most men begin to feel that these schemes for managing the poor have been carried too far. There is a strong desire arising in the county to *undo* what has been so mischievously attempted and enforced during the last century. Since the publication of the first edition of this Inquiry a considerable movement has been made in this and in the adjoining county. A few particulars will shew the present position of this question in the minds of practical and interested parties. A clergyman of this county has brought the state of one of our largest incorporated houses of industry before the owners and proprietors of land in the district. A few documents, illustrating the proceedings of this incorporation in the county of Norfolk, and of another similar incorporation in the county of

Suffolk, may perhaps more usefully shew the bearings, and disclose the real grounds of the question, than any theoretical discussions or controversies. We shall see what has been attempted, and on what grounds the attempts have hitherto failed or succeeded.

In the month of October of the past year, 1825, the following advertisement appeared in the Norfolk County Papers :

“ *Hundreds of Mitford and Launditch.*

“ A special meeting of the directors and guardians of the above hundreds will be held in the assembly room, at East Dereham, on Wednesday, the 2d day of November, at eleven o'clock, for the purpose of taking into their most serious consideration the expediency of applying to Parliament, during its next session, for an Act of disincorporation, or of adopting any other measures which may be thought necessary at the said meeting.”

About the same time an address, *proposing a plan of suspension*, was distributed by a respectable gentleman among the occupiers and proprietors of land in the two hundreds. The following is an abstract, shewing what amendments it was intended to propose to the plan of dissolving the incorporation.

*Amendment 1st.*—That from and after the Tuesday following the 24th of June, 1826, the poor persons in the house of industry, at Gressenhall, shall be conveyed to their respective parishes, and the remaining part of the establishment paid off.

*Second.*—That one man and his wife shall be appointed to keep the house aired, wind and water tight, and for their recompence shall have the use and profits of the garden and fruit trees.

*Third.*—That the bedding or other furniture be taken at a valuation by any overseer of the parishes in the two hundreds that may require them.

*Fourth.*—That a committee be appointed to receive the rents of the farm, mill, &c. then let, or to be let, and, after deducting all moderate and necessary charges, shall produce a clear account thereof to all persons who shall attend a general meeting, which the said committee shall call by advertisement, on the Tuesday next after the 24th June, 1827, when it shall be determined in what way the balance shall be disposed of.

*Fifth.*—That the house of industry, at Gressenhall, and the Acts of the incorporate body, be thus suspended for one year.

To this address the following postscript was annexed:—"The principal inhabitants of this parish are of opinion, that if the important point is carried, it will be followed by a considerable rise in the poor's rate." Before the special meeting an active canvass took place. The farmers and occupiers seemed to feel, that if the incorporation were dissolved, they would be exposed to the unrestricted interference of the magistracy, and the imposition of the idle and disorderly. This argument was pleaded at the public markets, and from farm to farm throughout the district. It was ad-

mitted on all hands that the management of the institution had been fraudulent and expensive—that as it respected many parishes the house was useless, and as it respected all burthensome, but still it was deemed by the practical men of the country a less evil to maintain a large cumbersome establishment, which in itself was mischievous as well as inconvenient, than to be exposed to the unrestricted interference of a third party in the business of the country. The discussion of the workhouse system, therefore, will do much good by eliciting more fully the great inconvenience of the present administration of the poor laws, and by establishing the conviction of it in the public mind. The expence of going to Parliament for an Act of dissolution was another objection, and a third arose from a persuasion entertained by some gentlemen, clergymen, and others, that this establishment might after all be converted into an asylum or infirmary, or hospital for the aged, impotent, and friendless. These and other minor objections were sufficient to induce a majority of the guardians to negative the proposition for the dissolution of the incorporation at the present moment. The following resolutions appeared in the County Papers :

“ At a general meeting of the guardians of the poor of the hundreds of Mitford and Launditch, called to consider the expediency of applying for an Act of Parliament to disincorporate the said hundreds and for other purposes—It was resolved,

First—That no such application be made.

“ Second—That a committee of ten directors and ten guardians (seven of whom shall form a quorum) be appointed to investigate the accounts, and the method of management which has hitherto been pursued, and to publish such parts of the said accounts and method of management as they may deem necessary.

“ Third—That the proceedings of the committee be reported to a general meeting of the guardians to be holden at the house of industry on the first Wednesday of July next.

“ Fourth—That extracts of the proceedings of the committee be printed, and a copy thereof sent to every guardian of the corporation within six months from the present time.”

A different course has been adopted by the guardians of an incorporated house of industry in the county of Suffolk. The determination of these gentlemen is likely to bring this subject before the country and before Parliament. The following extracts, taken chiefly from the *Ipswich Journal*,\* will shew the opinion of the noblemen, gentlemen, and occupiers of land in that part of the country.

On the 9th, 16th, and 23d days of October, 1824,

\* In this Journal a great deal of valuable correspondence has appeared on the subject of Workhouses. A pamphlet, containing many valuable letters, which appeared in this paper, has been published by a magistrate of the county of Suffolk, entitled “ Letters on the Kind and Economic Management of the Poor, chiefly as regarding Incorporated Poor Houses, with copious Tables of actual Expenditure.”

a notice was published in the Ipswich Journal, of which the following is a copy.

*Loes and Wilford Hundreds.*

A general meeting of the owners and occupiers of lands, within the incorporated hundreds of Loes and Wilford, in the county of Suffolk, is requested to be holden at the White Hart, Wickham Market, on Tuesday, 26th October, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, to take into consideration the general management of the poor of the said hundreds, and other objects relating thereto.

Signed by Lord Rendlesham and seven other country gentlemen.

In consequence of this advertisement a meeting was held, and the following resolutions, among others, were passed:—

First—That considering the great sum to which the maintenance of the poor amounts in the said hundreds annually, it appears to this meeting most desirable that a committee should be appointed to consider the best means of reducing every unnecessary expence in providing for the poor in the 33 incorporated parishes in the said hundreds.

Second—That a committee of 34 individuals, most interested, be appointed.

Third—That it be recommended to such committee to ascertain whether any material alteration can be made in the present system of maintaining the poor, with a view to lessen the very heavy expences attendant on the house of industry at Mel-

ton, and whether the existence of the said house does or does not materially and unnecessarily increase the expence of maintaining the poor of the incorporated parishes, without adequate beneficial results.

Fourth—That this committee shall for this purpose have access to all the books and accounts at the Melton house of industry, and the power of examining witnesses so as to enable them to gain every information on the subject, and report the result of their inquiries to a future general meeting, to be called by their chairman whenever they think proper.

Among many other resolutions passed at the different committee meetings, were the following :

1. That it is the opinion of this committee that the financial department of this incorporation has hitherto been so conducted as not to answer the purpose for which it was instituted.

2. That this committee do proceed to take into their consideration, whether by any modification, under the Bill in contemplation, and by exterior and interior management, this incorporation can be made to answer the purposes for which it was instituted.

After this intended Bill for *amending* the administration had been discussed, clause by clause, the following resolution of the committee was passed :

“ That it is the opinion of this committee, that the proposed Bill does not appear calculated to make such reductions in the expences of the estab-

lishment of the Melton House of Industry as it is the object of the Bill to obtain."

After the report was agreed upon and approved the following resolution was also passed :

" That the said report be laid before a general meeting, and that it be left to the wisdom of such meeting to decide whether a further committee should be appointed to substitute a Bill in lieu of the one rejected, or apply to Parliament for an Act to disincorporate the hundreds."

A meeting was accordingly held 25th Jan. 1825, and the following resolutions passed.

1. That from an examination of the report of the committee, it appears to this meeting that the principle which has hitherto governed the administration of the finances of the incorporated hundreds of Loes and Wilford, has occasioned a very great and unequal burden of contribution to the several parishes composing the incorporation.

2. That from practical experience it appears to this meeting, that no adequate beneficial result has in any manner accrued either to the parishes or to the poor, from the profuse expenditure of the public money, which, during the last 24 years, has taken place within the said incorporated hundreds.

3. That it is the opinion of this meeting that no amended Act of Parliament, no improved exterior or interior management of the pecuniary and domestic affairs of the poor house at Melton, can possibly avail to correct and prevent those abuses which have hitherto foiled the enlarged provisions



of repeated Acts of Parliament, baffled the redoubled vigilance of the directors and guardians, and swelled and perplexed, in a continually increasing ratio, the voluminous accounts of the said incorporated poor house.

4. That it is further the opinion of this meeting, that it is expedient to return to the old English system of parochial economy with regard to the poor, as enacted by the 43 of Eliz. and as amended by several more modern and very efficacious acts of the legislature.

5. That it is therefore the final opinion of this meeting, that an application be made to Parliament for an Act to repeal 31 Geo. III. entitled, &c. and also an Act passed 50 Geo. III. and the Act or Acts thereby repealed, with such clauses and provisions therein as relate to the sale or disposition of the land and buildings, as a committee to be appointed shall deem meet.

6. That such committee do consist of Lord Rendlesham, Andrew Arcedeckne, Esq. W. A. Shulham, Esq. Edm. Jenney, Esq. Rev. J. H. Groome, Rev. G. F. Tavel, W. W. Page, Esq. James Wen, Esq. and Mr. John Lewin.

*The following card, stating the reasons for a dissolution, has been circulated among the parties interested, and among members of parliament :*

“ Reasons for dissolving the incorporation of the hundreds of Loes and Wilford, in the county of Suffolk, consisting of thirty-three parishes.

“ In the year 1765 (60 years ago) a majority of the owners and occupiers within these hundreds obtained an Act of Parliament to enable them to try the experiment of incorporation. They tried it 25 years, and it failed.

“ They then obtained a second Act, and the improvements thereby introduced were tried for 20 years, which also failed.

“ They then obtained a third Act, under which a system of averages was introduced, and tried it for 15 years ; but this system also failed.

“ Thus in a period of 60 years three experiments have been tried under the incorporation system, and each has altogether failed. In fact, time and experience have proved that this system of incorporation, instead of benefiting the poor and decreasing the expence, has promoted and increased every evil it was intended to remedy. Therefore a very large majority\* of the principal owners and occupiers within these hundreds are convinced that they have no other remedy but a dissolution of the incorporation, *and a return to the original plan of parochial management.*

“ None of the three experiments produced any benefit to the poor, but the expences were thereby increased sixty thousand pounds!!! ”

\* Nineteen parishes assented to dissolve without *one dissenting voice*. One parish only dissented without an *assenting voice*. Total assenting parishes 28 ; dissenting five. Majority 23.— This majority of 23 parishes had 493 assenting votes to five dissenting. The hundreds are computed to contain about 40,000 acres of land. Owners of about 30,000 acres, and occupiers of about the same number, have signed the petition to dissolve.

The arguments for and against these institutions have now assumed a practical shape, and are no longer of a theoretical kind. The arguments for the dissolution of these establishments are plain and intelligible. They appear by actual experience to have been expensive, immoral, and unmanageable. But the objections to their dissolution still continue to have considerable weight, and it may be of some use to state the most current and important of them.

1. The first objection is to *any change* at all. This objection is very natural, and worthy of attention on every question of importance affecting the interests or property of society ; but in this case the objection to *any change* appears to be founded on the fact that all the changes which have been attempted, including the original change from the ancient parochial system, have proved expensive and abortive. This objection would seem, however, to be a strong presumption in favour of a return to the ancient system, by a departure from which such great evils have been introduced. These changes and their failure are certainly the best evidence which can be afforded for the abandonment of the principle on which they have all been effected.

2. It is objected that an application to Parliament is necessary in order to effect a dissolution, and that such an application would itself prove a considerable charge and expence. It is, I suppose, true, that Mr. Gilbert's Act, and all other kindred

Acts of Incorporation, made no provision for the dissolution of these establishments. It will therefore be necessary, in the present state of the law, whenever such dissolution shall be resolved upon, to apply to Parliament for authority to effect it. Mr. Gilbert and the inventors of these schemes assumed that they would certainly succeed, and prove permanent blessings in England. To render them universal and permanent, as well as to facilitate the formation of incorporations, the 22 G. III. a public Act, was passed to authorize in any case, with the consent of a certain proportion of the owners and occupiers of land in any district of England and Wales, the formation of village, hundred, and district workhouses. That Act was obtained by dint of perseverance on the part of Mr. Gilbert, with great reluctance from Parliament, and after strong objections had been stated by the most eminent lawyers of the day. Now if it has been experimentally ascertained that the principle of that Act is impolitic and mischievous, what objection can possibly exist to its repeal?—That repeal need not break up existing establishments, and if any town or cities should seek to avail themselves of workhouses, special Acts might be obtained. But an Act of Repeal might effect two important objects—the first, that no other district should incorporate *under the powers of that Act*, and the second, that all districts which have been incorporated under that or similar Acts shall be allowed (without a specific Act of Parliament

for each particular case) to dissolve whenever the same majority in value shall vote a certain number of successive times for the dissolution, as were allowed by their votes originally to sanction the incorporation. Some legislative movement of this sort might lead to a public discussion, renounce many absurd principles, facilitate the removal of incorporated workhouses, and the abandonment of many mischievous practices which spring out of and are countenanced by the laws which sanction that system.

3. Another objection to the dissolution of these establishments is, that their removal will expose parishes to the interference of the magistrates and the imposition of the disorderly. But if these dangers really exist, why should they not be removed, either by a repeal of the laws which have created them, or by legislative enactments which might prevent them? Many practical men are of opinion that the Select Vestry Act is adequate to this purpose. That Act, however, though right in its main principle of giving greater authority to the parish court, is not and cannot be generally efficacious. In many respects, through its partiality, it is injurious. It may and does succeed when the magistrates are reasonable, but it is the object of the law to check unreasonable and injurious proceedings. This Act would, no doubt, effect more good if it were *universal*. It would be very difficult for magistrates to defy a whole district acting under the powers of a similar but

general Act, applicable to all parishes. This would be legislating upon some fixed and important principle, which it would not be in the power of partiality or authority to resist. Though the *Select Vestry Act* appears to be partial and inapplicable to many villages, yet perhaps it is candid to state the opinion of a practical parish officer, communicated, in connexion with this very subject of removing work-houses, for which he is an advocate. "I was," he says "of your opinion, that the law must be altered—but as that was not in our power, we set about altering the practice, and succeeded, by attending strictly to the *Select Vestry Act*, and never varying from any thing done at those meetings on any account. We never had more than three or four summonses, and these we met and defeated without any difficulty. In fact many of them were so inconsistent, that the evil has in a great measure cured itself here. I often tell my neighbouring parish officers, that if they attend strictly to the *Select Vestry Act*, it is the easiest thing imaginable to keep the paupers out of the hands of meddling magistrates, as we have proved by practical experience." This evidence is important, but it is partial. It is from a part of the country where the magistrates have changed their opinions, and the community are in earnest—from an active practical man, and from a parish to which the *Select Vestry Act* strictly and legally applies.

4. Another objection to the dissolution of incor-

porations, and the last which I shall mention, is of the following kind:—"That these establishments have been reared at considerable expence, and that it is worth while to try whether, with due management, they may not be converted to useful purposes." To this objection it may be fair to reply, that these establishments have not only been *reared* but are still *continued* at a great expence, and that property is only valuable to individuals or communities so long as it is in some way or other advantageous. It may also be observed, that these institutions cannot be converted into mere asylums, or infirmaries, or hospitals, without some great legislative change in the principles and forms of law on which they are constructed. Some may be disposed to manage them in this way, but while the laws remain in their present shape, it will be impossible to compel a great number of interested parties to consent to a compulsory but illegal rate for such purposes. It may be presumed, therefore, that such attempts will fail. Indeed they have hitherto failed in almost every instance. A brief sketch of the principles on which this system is founded, the laws by which it is sanctioned, and the results which have followed, will be the best testimony on this subject. The following pages will, therefore, exhibit a series of schemes, laws, and facts, which may illustrate this particular branch of the poor laws of England and Wales.

## CHAPTER II.

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### SCHEMES.

**A**T the Reformation, a great change took place in the condition of all ranks, not only by the change of religion, but by the alienation of property from the monastic institutions. The dissolution of monachism, with all its apparatus of public charity, had in the first instance an unhappy effect on the condition of the lowest orders, who had become, by the habit of the Romish church, subservient and attached to those institutions. Multitudes, unaccustomed to habits of industry, were scattered up and down the country, in a state of vagrancy and beggary. The Government of the time deemed it necessary or popular to turn its attention to this temporary but pressing evil, and the statutes of Elizabeth were framed to meet it for one year. At the dissolution of the monastic institutions, and the alienation of ecclesiastical property during the Revolution in France, similar effects followed, but different remedies were adopted. The evil at the Revolution in France was greatly aggravated by



the violence and rage of a political fanaticism, which subverted the foundations of all laws, and rendered life as well as property insecure. It is said that at that time, a hundred thousand persons were thrown out of employment in Paris, and that the spectacle of mendicity was shocking and disgusting. The National Assembly appointed a Committee of Mendicancy, and the expenditure for the relief and subsistence of the poor, and for the suppression of mendicity, was stated to have amounted in one year to between two and three millions sterling. The imposition of a direct tax for the poor was contemplated and proposed, but never passed into a law in France. The foreign wars of the Republic soon disposed of the surplus population, and that country survived the shock without incurring the permanent burden. War and conquest were the immediate remedies in France, as trade and commerce were in England. In France there are, however, hospitals and asylums for misfortune, which have arisen on the ruins of the monastic institutions. These are partly connected with the Government, and partly supported by the citizens. They are open to the military, and to various descriptions of unfortunate persons, but they have no connexion with the business or domestic economy of the mass of the people. They are set apart to objects of charity, and dedicated under a public direction exclusively to such purposes. It is not a threat which one man can use

to another, that he will consign him to the hospital, as it is in England, that he will send him to the workhouse. I am not prepared to give any general history of the present state of the hospitals\* in France, to pass a panegyric upon those institutions, to propose their adoption in this country, nor

\* Those which I have seen appear to me well contrived and admirably managed. That at Caen, one of the finest in Europe, is kept in beautiful order. The tenants of it, at the time I saw it last year, appeared to be sick soldiers, and others who needed an asylum. I saw no confused mixture, or rabble of men, women, and children, no stigmas, no badges, no work-shops, but every thing that bespoke a generous and Christian-like national feeling. I should say the same of the hospitals of St. Malo and St. Servan. In the former town, I visited most of the institutions for the relief and benefit of the poor. They appeared to be all on a scale more than sufficient for the purposes of their institution. This might, perhaps, arise from the small number of military at present in that fortified town. The hospital at Malo is endowed with funds arising from the dues of the harbour, which are not, however, sufficient for its support. The military and sailors are admitted on a certain weekly payment made for each person by the Government; the poor of the town on the recommendation of respectable inhabitants and authorities, and the poor of the surrounding country on the payment of a small sum. This institution is for the sick, and there is another for the aged and infirm. It is conducted by a committee of gentlemen, and managed by a sisterhood of that most useful and ornamental order of the Romish church—*Les Sœurs de la Charité*. Opposite the gate-way is another charitable institution, under the direction of another sisterhood of the same order, who dispense medicines to the poor gratis, educate and in part feed and clothe about 300 girls, and regularly visit and relieve the poor and sick of the town. The gentleman, who introduced me to these establishments, observed that there was a very great difference in the nature of the duties, which these excellent women had to perform. In the hospital, where every inmate was introduced by recommendation, or the payment of a small sum, the attention of the sisters was most gratefully rewarded; but in the other case, where the charity was gratuitous, and open to a clamorous rabble, they often had to meet with unthankfulness and even abuse.

even to suggest at this moment, the conversion of our workhouse into the hospital system. At the same time, I must observe, that inasmuch as they are devoted to charity, and not to correction, as the relief they afford in no way interferes with the business, industry, or domestic economy of the people, they have a decided superiority over our houses of industry, as we continue to call them.

But I advert to these hospitals, for the purpose of remarking that they have risen on the ruins of the monastic institutions, and are still in many respects connected with the ecclesiastical establishment of the country, whereas our workhouse system was not introduced till more than a century after the Reformation was established, nor generally adopted till after the middle of the last century. Had there never been a period, when the poor were relieved without the assistance of such national establishments, we might have conceived that these or similar institutions were in the present state of society almost necessary. If our alternative lay between workhouses and hospitals, I should certainly prefer the latter, for nothing appears so absurd, and at the same time so degrading to the character of a great nation, as our present heterogeneous mixture of coercion and kindness, misfortune, vice, business, charity, and police, which our system of employing, punishing, and maintaining the poor has introduced.

The history of error is often the best road to

truth, and I *propose* in this chapter to give a brief sketch of the schemes *proposed* by individuals previously to the sanction of the workhouse system by the Legislature. Mr. Gilbert, in the scheme that he published in 1764, and which it will be necessary afterwards to notice, observes, “several parts of the scheme here published have been collected from the labours of those gentlemen, who have employed their thoughts and their pens on this subject by one who wishes ardently for it.”

It would fill many and perhaps not uninteresting volumes, to give the history of these labours, thoughts, writings, and ardent wishes, but a brief and scanty outline may be sufficient to shew the progress of the error, and how,

“The breach, though small at first, still opening wide  
In rushes folly with a full-moon tide,  
Then welcome errors of whatever size  
To justify it, by a thousand lies.”

Sir Josiah Child, a name well known in the history of our trade, was amongst the first who introduced these schemes for managing the poor, and his authority has frequently been produced in recommendation of them. When the House of Industry was proposed for the hundreds of Mitford and Launditch, in this county, Mr. Potter, Prebendary of Norwich, and Translator of the Greek Tragedians, who resided in the hundred of Launditch, thus speaks of Sir Josiah Child's plan, amongst some others—“The strong and compre-

hensive mind of Sir J. Child formed a bolder and a larger scheme." There cannot be a doubt, however, that had Mr. Potter, or Sir Josiah Child, foreseen the consequences of their bold scheme, as they have appeared in the case of the hundreds of Mitford and Launditch, which I shall afterwards have occasion to notice, they would have been as forward to oppose, as they were to recommend a plan which has proved so wasteful, immoral, and absurd.

But the scheme itself was designed to remedy what he calls the one only radical error, *leaving it to the care of every parish to maintain their own poor only*. This was the old English system, and is at present the Scotch system, and which, if we are to have a system, appears to be the best. But the remedy (for nothing is rational without a remedy) was first to be applied to the cities of London and Westminster, and the borough of Southwark, which were to be associated by Act of Parliament into one province, or line of communication for the relief of the poor. The country was afterwards to be divided into large districts, with a line of communication. This line of communication was to be kept up by an assembly of men to be incorporated by Act of Parliament, and to be distinguished by the appellation of Fathers of the Poor; to wear an honorable medal, and carry the green staff. The duties and the powers of these *patres conscripti pauperum*

were to be as extraordinary as the occasion. The constables, churchwardens, overseers, and other officers, were to be accountable to them *or their deputies*. They were to have liberty to assess and compel payment, to receive charitable donations every Lord's-day, at every church and meeting-house, and at any other time or times. They were to erect and endow hospitals, workhouses, and houses of correction ; to have all the powers of justices of the peace, and even more ; to send such poor as they should think fit beyond the seas into his Majesty's plantations, *to be maintained during their service, and to have their freedom afterwards*. They were to have power to erect petty banks and lumbards, to receive half the money paid at the doors of play-houses, and to have the patent of farthings. The treasure thus collected was to be sacred, and it was to be, if not sacrilege, yet felony, to misapply it. These Fathers were allowed to elect any churchmen or dissenters, into their number, who were willing to serve God, their King and Country, and to give £100 as a demonstration of their sincerity and intentions to labour in, and cultivate this most religious vineyard. They were to have, moreover, besides the authority exercised by the justices of the peace, power to fine all officers, and to carry on all trades with a non obstante to all patents. Such was the scheme, and Sir J. Child very naturally supposes that people would put this question—"What will be the ad-

vantage to the kingdom in general, and to the poor in particular, that will accrue by such a society of men, more than is enjoyed by the laws at present?"

His answer is like that of all who propose remedies and schemes.

"Innumerable and unspeakable." I cannot afford space to enumerate even those which he speaks of, but I will mention one that his Majesty's plantations would be regularly supplied with slaves, and those slaves be *maintained*. This oppressive and inquisitorial scheme was too much even for the meridian of the day, in which Sir J. Child lived. But when we compare this scheme with the results of those experiments, which have been but too closely modelled upon it, we cannot fail to observe that men of strong and comprehensive minds, when they indulge speculations respecting those parts of society, with which they have come least in contact, have generally run into the greatest errors, and sanctioned the most irrational and unnatural principles.

The next scheme, which I shall mention is, that which has been ascribed to Sir Matthew Hale, and which was published under the sanction of his name. It was, however, never proposed by that eminent lawyer. It was not published till after his death, and from papers which it is confessed, he directed might never be laid before the public. It is not known with what view he wrote the tract, or at what precise time. It may be now judged of

by its own merits, for even if it had the full authority of this great man, so eminent for piety, wisdom, and knowledge of the laws, it has received the refutation of trial and experiment, which no name can resist. It is sufficient to observe, that it was a plan for the incorporation of parishes, the erection of workhouses and factories, and the employment of the poor in different trades and manufactures, under the inspection and direction of parish officers associated for that purpose. The tract enumerates the evils which existed, the remedies proposed, and the many and great benefits that were to follow. I need not enumerate them, for it is sufficient to observe that the whole is founded upon the principle, that in this commercial country, national or parochial capital may be profitably employed upon the labour of persons, who have no interest in their work, even in competition with those who employ their own capital upon the labour of persons, who receive the full reward of their industry. Many experiments of this sort have been made, and I believe it may be stated, that all after a lapse of time have failed. But it has not, perhaps, been sufficiently observed how great the failure has been, what great expectations were formed, and what utter disappointment has followed.

To shew this, I shall refer to four illustrious schemers, who made great efforts at this time, and who were, some of them at least, probably known



to Sir M. Hale. Mr. Yarranton, Mr. Haines, Mr. Firmin, and Mr. Dunning, all published on the workhouse system between 1674 and 1686. Ridiculous as their schemes would now appear, we know that one of these gentlemen had the confidence and patronage of Archbishop Tillotson; another informs us that his travelling expences abroad, to collect information, were paid by twelve English gentlemen, and the others assure us, that their propositions were favourably received by several very judicious persons, and even by the great wisdom of Parliament. It is unnecessary to give the details of these propositions, especially as we might apply to all the remark, which Sir F. Eden could not refrain from applying to one of them, that it was as practicable as the advice given to children, "to catch birds, by putting salt upon their tails." But they were very gravely entertained at that time, and we may collect that much was expected from them by the public, as well as by the authors themselves, from the titles of their tracts.\*

\* A model of government for the good of the poor, and the wealth of the nation, with such a method of inspection, that frauds, corruption in officers, abuses to the poor, ill-administration of materials, &c. therein may be prevented; the stock raised and preserved; all poor people and their children for ever comfortably provided for; all idle hands employed; all oppressed parishes eased; all beggars and vagrants for the future restrained; poor prisoners for debt relieved, and malefactors reclaimed, to their own comforts, God's glory, and the kingdom's wealth and honour. Humbly offered to the consi-

After the Revolution there appears a long list of schemes of the same order. In 1696 a workhouse was opened at Bristol, "which, owing to the exertions of Mr. Cary, was at first very successful, and in consequence city workhouses came much into vogue during the reigns of King William and Queen Anne. Two years after the passing of the Bristol Act, Exeter, Hereford, Colchester, Kingston upon Hull, and Shaftesbury, were authorised to erect workhouses for the employment and maintenance of their poor, and these establishments

deration of the great wisdom of the nation, viz. his most excellent Majesty, and both Houses of Parliament.—*By R. Haines, Ato. London, 1678.*

A breviat of some proposals prepared to be offered to the great wisdom of the nation, the King's Most Excellent Majesty and both Houses of Parliament, for the speedy restoring the woollen manufacture, by a method practised in other nations, already perused and approved by those known promoters of England's Weal and Safety, the most illustrious Prince Rupert, and the Right Honourable the Earl of Shaftesbury, and since heard and encouraged by divers Members of the House of Commons, who, upon perusal, were pleased to declare that the same would be of great advantage to the nation; desiring the author to give his attendance when they are at leisure; and in the mean time to publish this brief account thereof, for general information.—*By R. Haines, Ato. 1679.*

England's Weal and Prosperity proposed, or Reasons for erecting Public Workhouses in every County, for the speedy promoting of Industry, and the Woollen Manufactory; shewing how the wealth of the nation may be increased many hundred thousand pounds per annum; and also how many thousand persons may be so reformed to their own and the whole Kingdom's present and future wealth and glory, that there may no more be a beggar bred up in the nation. Humbly offered to the consideration of the great wisdom of the nation, and presented to the Honourable House of Commons.—*By R. Haines, Ato. 1680.*

were soon after extended to Lynn, Sudbury, Gloucester, Plymouth, Norwich, and other places."

In all these cases the workhouses were confined to towns, and were established by local acts. But in 1703 Sir Humphrey Maxworth proposed a bill in parliament for extending the system to every parish in England by means of a parochial capital, for carrying on a parochial manufacture. This drew from De Foe his admirable treatise, which he entitled "giving alms no charity;" and as the leading maxims of this tract are so replete with good sense, and so applicable to our own times, I with pleasure relieve this history of error, by introducing the outlines of his argument.

1. There is in England more labour than hands to perform it, and consequently a want of people, not of employment.

2. No man in England, of sound limbs and senses, can be poor merely for want of work.

3. All our workhouses, corporations and charities for employing the poor and setting them to work as they now are employed, or any acts of parliament to empower overseers of parishes, or parishes themselves to employ the poor, are and will be public nuisances, mischiefs to the nation, which serve to the ruin of families and the encrease of the poor.

4. That it is a regulation of the poor that is wanted in England, not a setting them to work.

After this period many proposals were still made by various individuals for the establishment of work-

houses, working alms-houses, colleges of industry, bettering houses, and houses of protection, as they were called. I shall now briefly mention those which are connected with the parliamentary history of England, and with the names of public men. Mr. Hay, a member of the House of Commons, contributed by his publications and efforts to spread the false opinions which prevailed after this time respecting overseers and the nature of their office. His great objection to overseers was that they kept down the poor rate. On the 2d of May, 1735, the committee, of which he was chairman, reported a list of resolutions, which were agreed to, with some alterations, by the house. Those which are to my purpose are the following :

Resolved—3. That it is the opinion of this committee, that it is necessary, for the better relief and employment of the poor, that a public workhouse or workhouses, hospital or hospitals, house or houses of correction be established in proper places, and under proper regulations, in each county.

4. That it is the opinion of this committee, that in such workhouse or workhouses, all poor persons able to labour, be set to work, who shall either be sent thither, or come voluntarily for employment.

6. That it is the opinion of this committee, that in such house or houses of correction all idle and disorderly persons, vagrants, and such other criminals as shall be thought proper, be confined to hard labour

8. That it is the opinion of this committee, that such workhouses, hospitals, and houses of correction, be under the management of proper persons, regard being had to such as shall be benefactors to so good a work.

In the following year, 1736, Mr. Hay proposed a bill in conformity with these resolutions, which however failed. At this time the repeated publications on the subject of workhouses, and the resolutions and bills proposed in the House of Commons, seem to have excited a great deal of attention. The Earl of Hilborough and Sir R. Lloyd, proposed two schemes in the form of acts, for the establishment of county and large district workhouses. These schemes assumed that the children cannot be so well educated, nor the poor so well maintained in small numbers, and distinct families, as in large and well ordered houses, set apart for that purpose. They proposed that the justices in sessions should divide their county into as many districts as they think proper. They did not obtain the sanction of parliament.

In the year 1753, the well-known Mr. Henry Fielding laid before the public his scheme, which was like most others, to effect the reformation of manners and the employment of the poor, by brick and mortar, and architectural devices. He recommended the erecting a large building, consisting of three courts; the two outermost to be called the county house, and the innermost the county house

of correction, with a chapel and offices. The county house for Middlesex to be large enough to contain 5000 persons, and the house of correction 600.\*

It may be worthy of remark, that other great men, though they were all more or less affected with the incorporating and workhouse mania, did not so easily yield to the schemes of destroying the county, municipal, and ecclesiastical divisions of the country. Dr. Davenant proposed the employment of the poor, for profitable purposes, by a voluntary joint stock company.† His plan was more consis-

\* In the same year a Mr. Bailie published a work on the utility of workhouses, from which we may collect that they were not only expected to cure all moral diseases, but to teach all the arts and trades of the country. The following is his list of useful trades for the employment of people in workhouses: "To swingle flax, to heckle flax, to spin flax, to spool linen & woollen, to twist linen and woollen yarn, to wind quills for the weavers, to card tow and wool, to weave linen and woollen, to weave linsay woolsey, to buck and bleach linen, to weave wadding, to weave bed lace, to make hair sieves, to warp for the weavers, to knit stockings, caps, &c. to knit nets, to make pegs for the tilers, ditto for the shoe-makers, to make paste-board boxes, to make gloves, to knit cawls for wigs, to pick hairs for the barbers, to make thread and hair buttons, to make stays and harnesses for the weavers, to make all sorts of wicker ware, to make straw and chip hats for the women, to make bone lace, to make beehives and hassocks, to make matches and mops, to cut corks, to make baskets and door mats, to tease oakum and beat hemp, to make English carpets and tapestry, to make papier machè." Bonnet making, it appears, was recommended formerly as a blessing to the poor.

† As Dr. Davenant's plan may attract the attention of our speculators, I quote his own words: "That such persons as shall subscribe and pay the sum of £300,000, as a stock for and towards the better maintaining of the impotent poor, and

tent with his general views of trade and commerce, and would not of course have interfered with the police of the country. Mr. Locke, in his plan of schools of industry, though he proposed a joint stock for each hundred, could not dispense with the office of overseers with a proper degree of responsibility. An anonymous writer, 1751, expressed his opinion (in opposition to the prevailing sentiment of the time,) that the divisions of the country into parishes were sufficiently large—that a multitude is more easily governed by being divided into subordinate parts, than they could be in great and unwieldly numbers. He remarks that the nation was in general better governed when the counties were divided into hundreds, and the hundreds into decennaries, and when every man of the decennary was answerable for the rest.

Dr. Tucker, the Dean of Gloucester, who thought and speculated upon every subject connected with human nature, appears to have imbibed the opinion that the parochial districts, and the annual election of overseers, were defects; but yet endeavours to shape a plan of workhouses which should preserve the ancient divisions of the country, and the authority of parish officers.

In 1759 a committee of the House of Commons

for buying commodities and materials to employ and set at work the other poor, be incorporated and made one body politic, &c. by the name of the Governor and Company for maintaining and employing the Poor of this Kingdom."

was appointed to take into consideration the state of the poor of England. The clerks of the peace were ordered to transmit an account of the annual expence of passing vagrants, for four years. The resolutions of this committee stated to the house that the present method of relieving the poor in the respective parishes, where no workhouses have been provided for their reception and employment, is in general very burdensome to the inhabitants, and renders the poor miserable to themselves and useless to the community. That the employing the poor in works and manufactures would be a great benefit to the public; that the settling the poor in workhouses in the several counties of England and Wales, would be the most effectual method of relieving the aged, infirm, and impotent; employing the able, reforming the idle, and educating the young in religion and industry; that the poor in such workhouses would be better regulated and maintained by guardians, governors, and trustees, appointed and incorporated for such purpose, than by the annual parochial officers; that the erecting of workhouses on waste lands, and appropriating a certain quantity to be cultivated, in order to produce provisions for the poor, would be the means of instructing and employing them in agriculture, and lessen the public expence; that these establishments would effectually prevent all law-suits, that the law of settlement might be repealed, and the practice of passing



vagrants for ever cease. These resolutions were read to the house, a day was fixed for taking them into consideration, but was again put off, and the parliament was prorogued.

These resolutions went to recommend county workhouses, or at least were only general recommendations of the workhouse system. But in 1763, Mr. Samuel Cooper, a fellow of Magdalene-college, Cambridge, proposed the adoption of incorporated hundred houses, and where the hundred was small, for two or three hundreds united together. He observes that it was not a mere speculative notion, but that he had experience on his side. He refers to the two hundreds of Colnies and Carlford, in Suffolk,\* incorporated by an act

\* Suffolk is very famous for its workhouses. The beneficial effects of them may be collected from the important evidence of the Rev. Anthony Collett, a magistrate and director in one of the incorporated hundreds. He states the following increase of the rates for out-door pensions in the hundred of Blything, from Lady-day, 1810, when this head of expenditure commenced, to Lady, 1823.

	£.	s.	d.
1810 — 1811 .....	1	3	0
12 .....	1	12	0
13 .....	3	0	0
14 .....	6	0	9
15 .....	5	18	6
16 .....	1384	3	3
17 .....	2704	17	3
18 .....	1503	9	11½
19 .....	1065	10	11
20 .....	1623	15	3
21 .....	1743	6	8
22 .....	2297	5	4
23 .....	3536	15	11

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£15,877 4 9½

of 29 G. II. He infers that this scheme will considerably lessen the expence of maintaining the poor, for from Easter, 1759, to Michaelmas, 1762, a saving had been already made of above £2000; and in a few years the debt contracted for the institution would be cleared, and then rates will not be above half what they are at present. I have no means of ascertaining what the rates were on an average of seven years before the incorporation of the hundreds, or what was the debt contracted for the establishment—but it is quite evident that this celebrated experiment, in the hundreds of Colnies and Carlford, in Suffolk, has altogether failed. On referring to the parliamentary returns, I find that the population of the hundred of Colnies was 4169, and that the poor rate was £4374. 5s. or a guinea per head for the population. The hundred of Carlford contains 5966 souls, and the poor rate in 1821 was £7256. 7s. or £1. 4s. 6d. per head. The poor rate of England and Wales is about 11s. per head, and the poor rate of the two celebrated hundreds of Colnies and Carlford, is more than double that rate; and as to trade and manufacture there appears to be only one family or person employed in this way of the 242 persons of all sorts, who are congregated in the house of industry. Of the morals of the place I know nothing, but I have no doubt they perfectly agree with the improvidence and folly of the system.

It may now be important to detail the original

scheme of Mr. Gilbert, proposed in the following year, 1764, to his Majesty, the Parliament, the Sheriffs and Gentlemen of England. The principles of his scheme were generally adopted by many of the incorporated houses of industry which were established about this time in agricultural districts. An enumeration of the provisions of those local acts, though tedious, might be important, but I shall here confine my observations to Mr. Gilbert's scheme. It was entitled "a scheme for the better relief and employment of the poor, humbly submitted to the consideration of his Majesty and the two Houses of Parliament." It was accompanied by the following letter, sent to the High Sheriffs of the several counties of England and Wales.

*Queen Street, Westminster, July 18, 1764.*

SIR—Having taken the liberty of proposing to his Majesty and the two Houses of Parliament a scheme for the better relief and employment of the poor of this kingdom, and having lately added some further observations to it, I must beg leave to submit the inclosed to your inspection. If there appears any thing in it worthy of consideration, you will be pleased to communicate it to the gentlemen of your county, and if they should entertain a favourable opinion of the whole, as a national scheme, or should think it at all desirable for their own county, and such others as shall see it in the same light, in case the general scheme cannot take

place, I wish you and they would be pleased to form some plan for dividing your county into the most convenient districts, so as to be able to point out to your representatives, before the meeting of parliament, the parishes and places which may be properly incorporated in each district for that purpose. I think the most essential parts of this scheme *will be lost to the public*, if it should be confined to particular counties only, and yet I think if the larger plan cannot be effected, it will answer many good purposes to those counties, which may approve of the more confined one. I hope you will have the goodness to excuse the freedom I have here taken, as it only proceeds from a desire of making my poor endeavours in the least degree serviceable to the public, and believe me to be, with great respect,

THOMAS GILBERT.

It seems strange that Mr. Gilbert should have chosen a moment for the innovation, when, as he says, "His Majesty, by the glorious success of his arms, and the happy conclusion of the war, has restored peace and tranquillity to this country, and added to it an immense extent of territory, and when from the late wise regulations that have been made for extending our trade and commerce, by supplying so many millions of his new subjects with our manufactures, prudence and good policy seem to call for every hand that is fit for labour." It would appear from this passage, that it was still

thought, that houses of industry, under the direction of visitors, directors and guardians, gentlemen and clergy, would carry on manufactures with more success than the most prudent individuals could possibly do. It appears too, that it was not from the want of the means of employment even then that the legislature was called upon to adopt that scheme.

In the title of this proposed bill we find also the introduction of an important term which I shall afterwards have occasion to notice—maintenance. “Heard proposed for an act of parliament for the better government, maintenance, and employment of the poor in the several counties in England and Wales, and for repealing the present laws relating thereto, and for reducing the whole into one act.”

This was the opening of the scheme, and the first clause is sufficient to shew that the object of it was not only to repeal the old laws, but to break up and sweep away the parochial system of England.

1. Clause.—“That every county shall be divided into convenient districts, each district to comprehend a number of parishes, and extra-parochial places, which lie contiguous to each other.”

And upon this clause is the following observation:

“The present parochial districts are generally found too small for the purposes of employing the poor, and putting them under such government and regulation as may be necessary. Counties

will, it is apprehended, be too large for that purpose ; hundreds when they lie contiguous and entire may be convenient, but—it is apprehended that districts comprehending a certain number of parishes, townships, and extra-parochial places, which maintain their own poor, and lie contiguous, though they may run into different hundreds, will be a more convenient division for the purpose.”

The plan itself for dividing our provinces into pauper departments I do not notice, or the mode of taxation, or the order for conducting the houses, though nothing, in the whole history of scheming, has been more absurd. The scheme was most flattering on account of the prospects it held out of abolishing settlements, and forming a treasury for charitable donations to the poor, which (unlike any thing human) would be incapable of abuse. The scheme however was so important that it would require the utmost exertion of the legislative authority of the kingdom, both by its rewards and punishments, to carry it into execution. This useful, politic, benevolent scheme did require a legislative sanction of rewards and punishments of the most singular kind. The gentlemen, yeomanry, and labourers were not at first smitten in favour of this scheme, and at last it was carried against the common sense and common feeling of the country, and the manifest conviction of the House of Commons, who in 1782 yielded to Mr. Gilbert's importunities. They seemed to think (as the debate on this ques-

tion, in 1782, clearly shews), that it would be unkind not to yield to the modest pleading of a man who had taken so much pains, and, as it was stated, spent so much money as Mr. Gilbert had done. They seemed to feel, that if they were any longer to throw obstacles in the way of the accomplishment of the plan and ardent wishes of this veteran member, he must sink into his grave a broken-hearted martyr to this good cause.

But the rewards and punishments of this moral government are curious. There are indeed no rewards for the directors, visitors, and guardians. They were to be like the magistrates of the country, unpaid, disinterested, and honourable men. In cases of negligence they were not to pass with impunity, but were to be liable to fines and penalties. No method of levying or exacting the fines is prescribed, but I suppose they were to be, (as the magistrates at quarter sessions in the case of any appeal against their proceedings are,) the judges of their own misconduct. This is fair with honourable men, but not with the vulgar. Their rewards and punishments are specified, and the punishments more accurately detailed than the rewards; for every philosopher acknowledges the truth of Mr. Addison's maxim, that "the vulgar see no crime where they see no punishment." The particular benefits proposed to the poor, should it be accomplished, were the following:—

1. The old and infirm, when their strength and

substance fail them, and age and sickness creep upon them, will here find a comfortable habitation, and relief suited to their wants in peace and quietness.

2. The middle aged industrious poor, who are reduced to poverty and distress, either by sickness or other misfortunes, will receive, in the district where they reside, a speedy and suitable relief.

3. The children of such parents as are not able to maintain them, instead of struggling with the severity of hunger and of cold, and the danger attending an idle habit of life in the first stages of their infancy, will by this charity be placed out to service near their parents, and when of proper age be bound apprentice to some honest trade, or hired to some respectable person, or be returned to their parents.

In this perspective of a workhouse, we behold a comfortable habitation, the old and young, pining sickness and pitiable misfortune, receiving all the solace which it is in the power of humanity to give or receive. Had these establishments realized this peaceful and almost patriarchal picture, the national character might not have been degraded as it has been. Our rustic population, our swains and shepherds, might have parted with their friends and neighbours, their parents and children, with some reluctance and regret, but with the honourable satisfaction that they were gone to



abodes of "peace and quietness," and to the society of others as virtuous as themselves.

The scheme however was so delightful in prospect, that rewards and punishments were to be administered to districts. As an inducement to the several districts to complete their buildings within two years the act may direct, that a sum of money to be raised by *lotteries* within two years, shall be distributed at the end of that time to such districts as shall have finished, stocked, and furnished the necessary buildings. And as districts are responsible creatures, the refractory were to be punished, and the punishment inflicted, as all ought to be, for the two-fold purpose of correcting the naughty, and encouraging the good. "As a further inducement for every district to comply with the act, it may direct that a sum of money, not exceeding what they have annually collected for the use of the poor on a medium of four years, be raised and paid by such districts as shall refuse to comply, into the hands of the treasurer of each county, and distributed to such districts as shall have complied with the act." This is giving to schemes the force of law.

But how were these abodes of "peace and quietness" to be filled? First, the overseers of the different parishes are to send all the poor, good and bad, that they can find, and then the constables to make frequent privy searches for all rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, and disorderly persons,

and to take them before a justice of the peace, or to the weekly committee of directors for the district, to be examined and dismissed, or punished, as shall be necessary.

Moreover—"If any person so examined and detained shall be *suspected* of having committed any felony, robbery, or other misdemeanour, he may be advertised in the most public paper of that county, with a description of his person and where to be seen."

Again—"If an able-bodied person, who shall be ordered to *hard labour*, shall refuse to work or misbehave himself, he shall be corrected by whipping or *otherwise*—and after continuing for a certain time in such a state of *diobedience*, to be committed to the county gaol, there to lie till the next assize or quarter sessions, and then to be indicted and tried for that offence, and if convicted, to be transported to some of his Majesty's colonies and plantations." A very good preparatory school for a plantation. In Mr. Fielding's plan there was to be a partition wall between the house of correction and the hospital, so that virtue and vice were not to be confounded, though brought into very near connection. Even this partition wall is now broken down, poverty and crime are mixed and amalgamated, and there is a natural and frequented line of communication from the workhouse to the gaol, and from the gaol to the plantation, or to the gallows. And in truth this

is one of the capital errors and mischiefs of Mr. Gilbert's, Mr. Pitt's, and Mr. Whitbread's bills, for by thus approximating and confounding the criminal and necessitous poor, we have made poverty and crime terms almost convertible.

This brief history of the schemes proposed by individuals, contemplated by parliament, and recommended by individual members and committees, (the natural stages of schemes, ancient and modern, for rich and poor,) will prepare us to expect that they would gradually effect some changes in the simple code of laws provided for the relief of the poor of these kingdoms, and by various artificial rules and modification pervert the original aim of that code. It is important to mark these stages, for the subject is worthy of detail and observation. No observation on this subject can be accurate that is not patient.—Even the most vulgar errors will feed and gratify our curiosity, and it is a great means of our amusement, perhaps of our improvement, to mark the effects of these errors upon others and even upon ourselves. I would not however gild this error, for it is one which gnaws the root of social happiness. I have conducted the inquiry through this stage with a view of shewing its deformity in all its parts. We have seen (to use an image applied to vulgar errors,) “the black round substance begin to dilate, and after a while the head, the eyes, the tail, to be discernible, and at last become what the

ancients called *gyrinus*, we, a porwige or tadpole," or to use a figure, less applicable to the puddles through which we have waded, but perhaps less offensive—we have traced the insect from its caterpillar to its aurelia state, and in the next chapter shall see the full-blown moth, that for a while fluttered about our casements, then introduced itself into the wardrobe of our laws, where, undisturbed for years, it has been fretting and corroding the vestments and the ornaments of social life.

## CHAPTER III.

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### LAWS.

THE allowance system never received the final sanction of the legislature. The Committee of the House of Commons, in 1759, expressly observes, that the method of giving money out of the parochial rates to persons capable of labour, in order to prevent them from claiming an entire subsistence for themselves and their families, is contrary to the spirit and intention of the laws for the relief of the poor. It recommends the workhouse system as a remedy for that practice. The practice, however, since that time has received from the workhouse system (which is always recommended and resorted to as a corrective) the most powerful sanction. The proceedings of the magistrates in Berkshire, Norfolk, and other counties, the bills proposed by Mr. Whitbread, and also that proposed by Mr. Pitt, in 1795, were designed to confirm that practice, and certainly did recognize to the full extent the maxims of that

scheme: but the workhouse system has received the formal sanction of the legislature, and since the passing of Mr. Gilbert's act, has been incorporated with the public statutes of this realm. When that system is viewed in connection with the modern administration introduced on high authority, and persevered in since 1795, it may almost be said, that the legislature and the magistracy have compelled an adoption of that scheme in agricultural districts, in order to avoid the palpable evils of another. Here it is that an examination of the workhouse system becomes of so much importance in an enquiry into the nature and effects of the poor laws. At the present moment, we find well-informed and well-disposed individuals recommending the adoption of the one in order to avoid the impositions of the other. I have before me a pamphlet, published last year, under the patronage of the Duke of Buckingham, by the "Rev. J. Bosworth, M.A. F.A.S. F.R.S.L. Vicar of Little Horwood Beccles, and author of the *Elements of the Anglo-Saxon Language, &c. &c.*" It is intitled, "the practical means of reducing the poor rate, encouraging virtue, and increasing the comforts of the aged, afflicted, and deserving poor, as well as of *repressing able-bodied pauperism*, by a proper application of the existing laws respecting select vestries and *incorporated houses of industry*." The table of contents will be sufficient to attest the truth of my

observation, and to explain the scope of this gentleman's argument.\* I do not attempt to refute the particular points of this publication, because I hope the following examination of the laws and the facts which accompany it may establish a conviction, that the workhouse system and other systems in alliance with it, are unconstitutional, unchristian, and impolitic. In deviating from the cur-

\* The present state of the poor degraded.—How to remedy the evil.—By encouragement—Instructing the rising generation—Allowing the industrious poor gardens, and to build cottages—Establishing and encouraging saving banks and friendly institutions.—When encouragement is insufficient, the desired effect must be produced by restraint and coercion—The restraint of select vestries is useful in promoting morality—Example at Putney, in Surrey—Coercion, in houses of industry, may have the same happy tendency—Examples, at Rosp-house, at Barrow-upon-Soar, at Ruddington and at Bingham—Restraint and coercion will be as effective in reducing the rates, as in promoting morality—Restraint of select vestries reduces the rates, (examples.)—Coercion to industry, in workhouses, will tend to a still greater reduction, confirmed by the account of Putney, Basford, and Sharlow, &c.—Large incorporated houses of industry are most powerful auxiliaries, as appears from an increase in the number of parishes incorporating—From a reference to the accounts at Basford, but small workhouses may be of very great benefit where the magistrates support the overseers, as at Southwell, in Nottinghamshire—Larger the institution, the more likely to produce a great reduction—Small workhouses for villages useless, as at Etwall, in Derbyshire—Objections are brought against large incorporated houses of industry, but if these be maturely considered and candidly answered, they will strengthen the conviction of their utility.—The conclusion is, that the only effectual way of benefitting the poor is by encouraging and even *enforcing* industry; for it will not only promote *virtue*, but the *pecuniary reduction of the poor's rate*. If these results can be produced by well-conducted select vestries, and properly classed incorporated houses of industry, much more may be effected by a proper attention to the existing laws, than by any immediate alteration in them.

rent of popular opinion we are naturally anxious to take advantage of every favourable circumstance which may contribute to stem or abate the tide which opposes us. The study of the Anglo-Saxon language, which has been facilitated by many modern publications, has within a few years been considerably revived. It would be a happy circumstance if the study of that ancient language should contribute to revive our admiration of institutions which are the elements of our laws, the defences of our liberties, and the basis of our free constitution. Those institutions for which we are indebted to our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, we had preserved (even after we had lost the dome-book, the record of their laws,) till in the last century the incorporating system swept away or fractured that admirable frame-work of society. Our rude and manly ancestors would have rejected with disdain those innovations, which we, corrupting their simple language, as we have corrupted their simple code of laws, must now call *new-fangled* schemes.

The original law of England, the Saxon, that parent of all good laws, the common law of the land provided that no man should starve, and by an excellent parochial distribution of the country, by civil and ecclesiastical parish officers, and by a free, mutual, and responsible police, effectually secured that object. It may fairly be questioned whether any or all of those statutes which have



weighed down this common law, have ever discovered a better point and boundary for legislation. Between the law of Alfred and the Reformation a great many statutes passed to provide for the relief of the poor, which Dr. Burn has collected in his history of the poor laws. It is curious to observe how much the mind even of Dr. Burn was influenced by the language and opinions which had become so common at the time he wrote. It is obvious that all these statutes, as well as all that followed till the Revolution, were for the *relief* of the poor, yet that able writer sums up the digest which he gives of the statutes with this first observation—"the first thing clearly observable from what has been laid down is this, that the statute of the 43 Eliz. was not the *first compulsive law of maintenance*." There are many writers who dispute Dr. Burn's position respecting the compulsive nature of these statutes, but it is quite clear that they were not designed to enforce *maintenance* but *relief*. The statement which he makes in support of his observation, and which is a recital of the different methods adopted to *relieve* the impotent, confirms this. Even with regard to that part of the poor which was attached to the monasteries, and therefore the most likely to come within the reach of a law of maintenance, he says himself, "the poor received scraps at their gates *and other donations, sometimes*." It is therefore occasional relief which he means, when he uses the term

maintenance, in the following observation :—  
 “ During the time that the monastic institutions continued there were many other regulations with respect to the poor, made from time to time by acts of parliament for the employment of some, the punishment of others, and the maintenance of the rest.” This distinction between legal relief and legal maintenance is, as we shall see, of great importance.

The memorable statute of the 43 Eliz. is entitled “ An act for the Relief of the Poor.” This law has been the subject of much praise by most writers upon the poor laws, and it must be confessed, that while it was unincumbered by any other statute and was strictly adhered to, much benefit and slight mischief followed from it. It is not perhaps ascribing too much to the statute of Eliz. to affirm, that it was the means through the artificial application of capital by parish stocks, of introducing, in many parts of England, and especially in the eastern and southern districts, the manufactures of Germany, Flanders, and France. From these countries a great many Protestant emigrants fled to England, just at the time when a number of persons were thrown out of the means of living, by the alienation of the monastic property, and when the expedient of parish stocks enabled the parish officers to avail themselves of the skill of these foreigners to set on work the unemployed. There are many proofs that the expedient, from the time of Eliza-

beth to the passing of 13 and 14 Charles II. was successful. That act recites that the parish stocks, in many places, had so much accumulated, that many idle persons presumed upon them as means of subsistence. The parish stocks were useful and even profitable while trade was comparatively limited, but when democratic principles began to prevail, and as Lord Clarendon observes, country gentlemen began to bind out their sons to merchants, the enterprize of individuals altogether superceded any other scheme of trade. From that time to the present all attempts to turn the labour of paupers to account have been found more or less unprofitable and futile. The statute of Elizabeth therefore is chiefly to be admired for its policy, but that policy has now altogether ceased ; and for it we have substituted a new and vicious interpretation. The allowance and workhouse systems (adopting the provisions of the schemes for employing and maintaining the poor which we have noticed) have substituted, in the administration of the laws and in the laws themselves, the principle of finding full and constant employment, with regular and complete maintenance for all persons, instead of the original principle of this statute, viz. setting to work those who had no proper calling either in trade or agriculture, and of affording relief in aid of living for those who were in a state of absolute impotence. It is in this large and vicious interpretation in which this statute is often praised

as a law of charity. It seems, however, that a law of charity (properly so called) compelled and enforced by human laws, must always be rather a subject of regret and humiliation than of national pride and eulogy in a Christian, or even in any country. Who does not desire that our nature, cultivated by our religion, munificent as it is, should, without the aid of law, supply the necessities of our fellow creatures? But we are forbidden to hope that this law of kindness should ever prevail; we are told that it is visionary and the height of folly to indulge such an expectation; that it is matter of perfect certainty that the selfish principle would tyrannize over every other, and that multitudes (as some compute one-half, and others one-third at least of the population) would die for want of sustenance. Be it so; then the compulsive law of charity is necessary and expedient, but it becomes so through the degradation of our nature, the humiliation of our religion, and the mistakes of our domestic policy. We must view the statute of Eliz. (if we regard it as a law of charity and not of temporary policy) as a monument not to the benevolence but to the departed worth of the nation, and take to ourselves the rightful satisfaction of those who slew the prophets and garnished their sepulchres, for the only difference between them and ourselves is this, that we commend and destroy the virtues as they did the virtuous of mankind. An excellent divine of the church of Scotland has

taken that ground on which it is certainly most becoming a minister of the Christian religion to debate this subject. He has indeed descended from the lofty flight of principle and feeling, to the lower regions of dull detail, and has produced a successful experiment, which is, I should suppose, calculated to carry some conviction even to the minds of those scrupulous persons, who judge of virtue and vice, good and evil, by a debtor and creditor account.\* Most of the evils which we lament are unquestionably the evils of an artificial system, and we may perhaps assert hereafter of the English what he has expressed as his firm conviction of the Scottish practice. “ I must not disguise my conviction, that apart from the support of education and of institutions for disease, public charity in any form is an evil, and that the Scottish method is only to be tolerated because of its insignificance and the rooted establishment it hath gotten in all our parishes. But though I would tolerate it in practice, I cannot defend it in principle ; and I speak it according to my fair and experimental impressions when I say, that a parish might be maintained in far greater comfort, and in a more soundly economic condition, without it altogether.” I have made these observations to shew that the original policy of the statute of Eliz. has ceased,

\* See Edinburgh Review, No. LXXXI. Art. Poor Laws of Scotland. Statement of Dr. Chalmers’s Experience.

and that it stands perfectly distinct in principle from our modern laws and practices. It would be happy for the nation, however, if we could fall back to that statute, as it was interpreted for the first hundred years after its enactment.

The original policy of the law of settlement (if indeed it ever had any policy) has been altogether lost sight of, amidst a multitude of artificial rules which are consistent only in one feature, their universal mischievousness. Several Committees of the House of Commons have recommended the repeal of this statute of ch. 13 and 14, Ca. 11,\* in order to replace the law of settlement upon its ancient footing, as one of the first steps in reformation. It should, however, be remembered, that the law of settlement adopted no new principle but new regulations, which were of insignificant importance, till the new principle in law and practice of maintaining and catering for the population was introduced, first by the recommendation of benevolent individuals, then by the adoption of separate communities, and at last by the sanction of the public acts of the legislature. The evils of the laws of settlement vary in proportion to the latitude of the law and practice, and it would seem therefore advisable to begin with a restriction in these, in order to prepare for the repeal or alteration of what is little more than a specific regulation.

\* See Report H. C. 1812.

I am told that at the last quarter sessions for this district of the county there were nineteen cases of removal. The sum expended on these cases would not be less than £10 for each, which at one quarter sessions for a district would be £190.—Now it appears that the whole expence for all kinds of litigation for the 692 parishes of Scotland, for ten years, was £1640. 10s. being at an average for all Scotland, for law expences, of £164. 1s. per ann. Certainly the Scotch law of settlement is more simple than our own, but I suppose that if our whole code of statutes and adjudications respecting settlement were to be made of legal authority in Scotland to-morrow, they would not add five pounds a year to the expence, if at the same time the unlimited and indiscriminate application of the law of maintenance which prevails in this part of the country, did not accompany the transfer; and on the contrary, if the salutary practice of relief which prevails in Scotland were to be transferred immediately to the neighbourhood of Lynn, we should not hear of nineteen cases nor perhaps of one case of litigation respecting the poor at our next quarter sessions, though our own laws of settlement remained in force.

The original policy of the law of settlement has ceased which was to prevent a wandering and unsettled life, or to favour some particular places and estates, or perhaps to secure to the King the hearth-tax with which to liquidate his debts. It is

entitled an act for the relief of the poor, and did not in that respect alter the principle of the statute of Elizabeth. This act passed 1662, and the same may be observed of the law of certificates (1697), 8 and 9, W. 3, c. 30, which is entitled an act for supplying some defects in the laws for the relief of the poor of this kingdom. This was only a "patch," and it is not worth while to discuss its particular merits.

In the 9 Geo. 1, c. 7, (1722), we observe a considerable alteration in the title, and a still greater in the body and forms of the act. Settlement and employment are added to relief in the title. "An act for amending the laws relating to settlement, employment, and relief of the poor." Maintenance is not mentioned in the preamble, but the body of the act discovers, that the justices had begun to order maintenance. This act was intended first to regulate the interference of the justices, with which interference the order of maintenance grew up, and secondly, to enable the overseers to provide that maintenance in the cheapest and perhaps the best manner, if such a provision must be enforced. With this act is connected a form of *order of maintenance*, and also a form of "contract for maintenance" between the parish officers and any yeoman of the parish, *to find, provide, and allow*, unto all such poor people as shall be lawfully entitled to relief and *maintenance, sufficient lodging, meat, drink, clothing, employment,*



*and other things necessary for their keeping and maintenance.* And what is this law of maintenance in this and every case but the law of bondage?—for the said yeoman “is to have and take unto himself the benefit of the said poor people’s work, labour, and service, during the said time.” Here too in this act of parliament, the first and perhaps the best of our maintaining laws, we see the folly of attempting to regulate principles which every legislature ought to reprobate and proscribe. The 22 G. 3, has repealed so much of the 9 G. 1, as relates to the contract for maintenance, though it has laid down the same principle in another form. The provisions which require the oath of the poor person wanting maintenance, the warrant thereupon to summon the overseers, and the order of maintenance are still parts of the law, but have not usually the force of law. These salutary provisions are not acted upon in one case of ten thousand. Instead of them, nothing more is now requisite than the periodical decrees and scales of the local magistracy, or private billets, (I use the term in the military English, not in the trifling French sense,) sent by the hands of a pauper, with orders of maintenance, without any other hearing than that of the pauper’s complaint, or any other reason than that of the will or the scale of the magistrate. The following are specimens of some which have fallen into my possession; they are very easily to be obtained, but I

think the statement of one or two cannot fail to do good, and perhaps convince the most zealous advocates of the present practice, that it is not "the law of the land administered in its purest and most unpervverted sense, spirit, and letter." I should observe that the law is often worse than the practice, but here I must remark that the practice is worse than the law, which is, however, bad. It is unnecessary to introduce the legal documents, and to point out the regular course, for most persons are well acquainted with them, and the irregularity of the following orders will sufficiently appear on a perusal of them. They were sent by the hands of paupers in a parish where there was a select vestry regularly appointed and regularly acting.

The first is without date, but it is recent, and the bearer of it was a healthy strong young man.

To the churchwardens and overseers of the poor in the parish of ———.

The churchwardens and overseers of the poor in the said parish must provide a sufficiency for the maintenance of A. B. a pauper in the said parish of ———. They must allow him five shillings weekly.

C. D. (Magistrate.)

The next is a note directed to the overseer of the parish, signed by a neighbouring magistrate.

Mr. A. B.

"The bearer, Thomas ———, complains to me

for "want of relief from you.—As he seems to be in a distressed situation, if you do not *satisfy him* you must meet him here, to-morrow morning, by nine o'clock "

C. D. (Magistrate.)

The clergyman of the parish assures me that this person was refused relief by the unanimous voice of the vestry on the most substantial reasons. I have a number of other papers of this description,\* from different parts of the county, but these perhaps may be sufficient to shew the irregularity even in enforcing the bad law of maintenance. It must not be thought these orders are exceptions to the rule—they are or were I believe the common practice. Sir Thomas Bernard, who for his zeal in this superstition deserves to be canonized, had

\* The paupers not only bring notes from the magistrate, but send their own to the overseers. The following is a curious one of this sort from a bricklayer to the overseer. The man is in the habit of earning a guinea per week in the summer, and is at all times capable of work; he has a large family, as the note to the overseer will shew. It is as follows:

"Mr. —, I shall be greatly obliged to you for two shirts for my boy Robert, and one for Mathew, and two for my boy William, and one shirt for John, and two shifts for the two girls; and if you please, the two girls want two under petticoats and two outside petticoats, and the three biggest boys want each of them a slop, and my little boy a piece for two tyes; and I pray, Sir, will you be so kind to let me have two pair of stockings for Robert, and I pray, Sir, will you let me have one frock for my biggest girl."

I extract the list of articles:—2 shirts, 1 shirt, 2 shirts, 1 shirt, 2 shifts, 2 under petticoats, 2 outside petticoats, 3 slops, 2 tyes, 2 pair of stockings, and 1 frock.—Total, 20 articles.

a great horror of parish vestries, and he mentions as a reason, for not allowing them any controul over the overseers or magistrates, the following case :—

“ I once ordered (and the overseer assented to it with pleasure, though probably the vestry would not) the allowance of eight shillings a week for the relief of an old man, of excellent character for sobriety and industry.” Now certainly if Sir Thos. Bernard and the overseers had contributed out of their own pockets, and prevailed on others to assist in raising a pension of 8s. per week for a deserving old man, it would have been an honourable and benevolent action ; but to order, either by threatening or coaxing overseers, such an unusual sum contrary to the consent or without the knowledge of the vestry, who are called upon to pay this illegal sum, is a fraud and an injustice ; and so far from viewing such actions as proofs of benevolence, they are rather to be regarded as abuses of power, and as indicating a want of that high sense of honour and integrity which is the best ornament of a magistrate and minister of justice. I mention the case of Sir Thomas Bernard, because every one knows the private worth of that excellent man, but the best of men have perhaps, like all devotees, erred the most extravagantly in their pious frauds. Dr. Burn has well observed of this kind of charity, that it “ is indeed no other, than to set up private judgment against the public law. The legislature have provided for the poor in one

way, but we think that is not so good, and therefore we will have a way of our own, and it fares accordingly. The laws are broken through like cob-webs. The worst and most abandoned of the people are sustained by the efforts of well-meant, but very ill-judged charity, whilst the modest, humble, virtuous, and really necessitous poor are neglected.—Therefore let private judgment or rather weakness and obstinacy give way, at least for a time, and let it be tried what the laws can do.”

Having thus traced the introduction of our system of maintenance by schemes and laws, I proceed to notice the 22 G. III. (1782), “an act for the better relief and employment of the Poor.” This act will shew how completely the legislature has sanctioned the present method of feeding, clothing, working, and punishing the population, especially in agricultural districts. I shall first select those sections of the act, which refer to these several points, and then offer a few observations.

Section first repeals so much of 9 G. I. c. 7, “as respects the maintaining or hiring out the poor by contract,” but the second section adopts the very same principle under different modifications. “That it shall and may be lawful for the visitor and guardian, or visitors and guardians, appointed as hereafter-mentioned, to make agreement with any person or persons for the *diet or clothing* of such poor persons who shall be sent to the house or houses, to be provided under the

authority of this act, and *for the work and labour of such poor persons.*"

The 4 and 5 provide for the incorporation of parishes, townships, and places, which, with the powers given to the guardians in 7 and 8 sections, uproot and destroy the parochial system of England where such acts take effect. "And where guardians are appointed, neither churchwardens nor overseers shall intermeddle in the care and management of the poor; but the guardians shall be invested with all powers given by any act of parliament to the overseers of the poor, and in all respects except in regard to making and collecting the rates, shall be an overseer; but the churchwarden and overseers shall continue to be liable to collect the poor rate, and shall pay the same to the guardians."

The 10, 11, 12, 13 sections provide for the appointments of visitor, governor, treasurer, guardians, &c. and the 14th, which is a remarkable one, provides, "That the office of guardian, governor, visitor, and treasurer, shall determine in Easter-week, *yearly.*"

The 30 S. authorizes the guardian to send to the house all children, either orphans of any age, or the children whose parents may be living above the age of seven years, if they become chargeable.

The 31 S. provides, that idle persons, who neglect to provide for themselves, shall be prose-

ented by the guardians, and punished as idle and disorderly persons.

The 32 S. is important, as it provides for persons not able to get employment.—“ When there shall be any poor person able and willing to work, but who cannot get employment, the guardian may agree for the labour of such poor person at any employment suited to his strength and capacity, and *maintain, lodge, and provide for him*, until such employment shall be procured, and during the time of such work, and to receive the money earned, and apply it in such maintenance, and make up the deficiency, and if such poor person shall refuse to work, or run away from such employment, the guardian shall complain to a justice, who shall on conviction commit the offender to the house of correction, to be kept to hard labour.

The 35 S. throws open to the justices the power of ordering occasional relief. “ On complaint on oath to a justice on behalf of any poor person belonging to any parish or place, that the guardian hath refused to any poor person proper relief, he, (on enquiry into the circumstances upon oath) may order *some weekly or other relief*, or direct such guardian to send him to the poor-house if he shall appear to be a fit object to be kept and provided for there.”

There are also specific rules for the clothing, maintenance, victuals, beer, firing, and other neces-

saries, fixed by act of parliament; and besides these provisions there are forms and schedules which go still further into detail. The act is entitled "An act for the relief and employment," but the body of it, and the forms of it all declare the principle of maintenance. The form for a public meeting is for providing "for the maintenance and employment of the poor." No. 16. "Mode of adjusting the second account mentioned in the act respecting victuals, beer, firing, and other necessaries," which is done by a monthly table drawn out and fixed up in the house, and which was probably the origin or the pattern of the magistrates' scales in those hundreds where there are no houses of industry.

The act also provides that every poor person receiving relief shall wear a badge, but adds this curious form of excuse by the justices or directors: "I, A. B. a justice of the peace for the county of —, *having received proof upon oath before me*, that C. D. a poor person receiving weekly relief from the parish of —, in the county of —, is a person of *very decent and orderly behaviour*, do hereby direct the guardians of the poor for the said parish to omit putting the badge upon the coat (or gown of a female) of the said C. D. and to excuse his or her wearing the same as long as he or she shall *continue to behave orderly and decently*." It must certainly have a moral effect to stigmatize guilt where it is certain; and where the



distinctions between guilt and innocence are nice and difficult, we cannot do better than lodge an awful discretion in the breast of honourable men. This discretion, however, has not always been allowed even upon oath. In one of the bye-laws of a neighbouring hundred house, one of the badges authorized by law, is not the S to signify slave, nor the V to signify vagrant, nor the large Roman P to signify pauper, but it is to be written out in full length thus, "Infamous liar." Mr. Whitbread, in one of his bills, directed that the poor should walk about the country with the badge, "Criminal poor," in large letters, for one whole year, as the best and most moral means of instilling into the minds of these individuals and of their neighbours, nice, and delicate, and virtuous feelings.\*

\* One of our ancient and obsolete statutes enacted, that any person may take any loiterer and bring him to the two next justices, who shall, on conviction, cause the same loiterer to be marked with a hot iron in the breast with the letter V, and adjudge him to the person bringing him to be his slave for two years, giving him only bread and water or small drink, and such refuse of meat as he shall think fit, and causing him to work by beating, chaining, or otherwise, in such work and labour (how vile soever it be) as he shall put him unto. And if he shall run away, his master may retake him, and punish him by chains or beating as aforesaid, and on conviction of such offence before two justices, they shall cause him to be marked on the forehead or ball of the cheek with an hot iron with the letter S, and adjudge him to be the said master's slave for ever. And if he shall again run away, he shall be taken as a felon, and suffer pains of death as other felons ought to do.

We certainly have given up this kidnapping system, at least in England, but we have admitted into our laws, called poor laws, the same principle in a mitigated form. We have dropt the S and the V and the hot iron, but we allow the bread and

It is unnecessary to quote any further from the rubrick, ritual, and canons of this degrading superstition. Enough has been stated to shew the anomalous and preposterous nature of the regulations which have been introduced by the legislature into our charity code of laws. But it may perhaps be worth while to make a few observations, which must strike the plainest understanding, in reviewing these charitable, or rather these penal statutes, enacted against the poor.

1. The first innovation which we observe, and which has been introduced by the schemes and laws of the last century, is the substitution of the law of maintenance for the discretionary law of

water, and small drink and hard labour; and we have introduced into our schemes and laws for maintaining and punishing the poor, the Roman letter P as the badge of all paupers. Mr. Gilbert raised a very strong and unnatural feeling at the time he proposed his act. The poor were visited not only in life but even after death with the stigma P. I do not know that it was fixed upon the coffins, over which surviving friends would shed their tears of joy for the departed, and tears of sorrow for themselves; but from 1784 to 1789 (a memorable æra) I find that of 21 burials, 11 of the names entered in my parish register book are stigmatized with the roman letter P. After that time the practice being found, I suppose, to have no salutary effect on the living, and to reek no vengeance on the dead, was discontinued at least from my parish register book. Perhaps there is not a more accurate description of the state of many of our workhouses and other paupers, than is to be found in the following fragment :

Si quis tempore servitutis commississet aliquod crimen propter quod notis in fronte et stigmatis compunctus vel in publicos carceres conjectus fuisset, aut propter delictum aliquod, verberibus affectus, illud confessus est, ac diende gratia cum domino inita, manumissus ab eo fuisset ex lege Cælia Sentia, libertus dedititius fiebat ac infimam libertatem accipiebat.

relief. This was, as we have seen, concealed from the titles of the statutes, even after it was admitted as a principle, and modified as such by specific regulations. In the next act of importance that passed the legislature after Mr. Gilbert's act, the principle of maintenance and employment for the people is completely acknowledged. The 36, G. III. c. 10, an act passed 1795, and proposed, I believe, by Sir William Young, thus states the object of that act, of the 22 G. III. and of the local acts in connection with it: "An act for the better relief of the poor within the several hundreds, towns, and districts, in that part of Great Britain called England, incorporated by divers acts of parliament, *for the purpose of the better maintenance and employment of the poor*, and for enlarging the powers of the guardians of the poor within the said several hundreds, towns, and districts, for the *support and maintenance of the poor*." It is worthy of observation, in noticing this change, that all the returns to parliament respecting the monies expended on the poor, till some time after the passing of these acts, were thus reported—"The account of monies expended for the *relief* of the poor in England and Wales;" whereas the modern accounts are thus reported—"The account of monies expended for the *maintenance* of the poor in England and Wales." The Scotch returns are yet in the following forms: "Monies expended on the poor," "Annual col-

lections for the poor," " Funds of the poor ;" but no maintenance of the poor. It is of the greatest importance to notice the *fædum crimen servitutis* of all our maintenance and allowance systems, whether they are managed by guardians, visitors, and directors, or by magistrates, overseers, and vestries. The customary value of work, the great protection of free labourers, is in many parts of the country destroyed. For the wages of labour is substituted a scale of maintenance, for which maintenance (paid often in great part by uninterested parties) the employer, whether he be a magistrate, an overseer, or a farmer, takes the work and service of the labourer, which he, on pain of punishment, is bound to render. This seems to be a very near approximation to slavery. Better surely that the poor should be relieved, and the labourers preserve their liberty and connection with freemen, than that they should be maintained and sold, and and their bodily exertions (if they are capable of any) sold in this free country. If the public and local acts which have passed the parliament under the colour of charity were examined, they would be found to contain principles that are inconsistent with the institutions of this and of every free country. But they are (as the history of all countries testifies) necessary parts of the law of maintenance, and if you would avoid the one, you must abandon the other. Relief for cases of necessity, and not maintenance in all cases, is the only law (if law

must be resorted to) which is consistent with the liberties, interest, and happiness of the population. I need not say that the present is the most expensive system, for I assume that free is always more valuable than servile labour. But if the present were the cheapest plan, I cannot believe that our magistrates, gentry, and yeomanry, will continue to uphold the present unjust proceeding, and deface the land of liberty with their bills of fare, of porridge, and of sale, for the labourers of England. I cannot believe that they will long have the power to do so; for it is incredible that the government, while it is in every other department pursuing a career of freedom and of fame, should allow the present paltry restrictions on agricultural labour and labourers to continue. The evils, however, are deeply rooted in rural economy. These customs in different parts of the country have now the force of law; they are, in principle at least, in accordance with express acts of parliament—they have been commended by the leading men of the country—they have been long continued—they have been looked upon as reasonable—they have been rendered, by local legislation, certain and compulsory. They are not, however, quite peaceable—they yet want this qualification of a *legal* custom. I have heard several magistrates say, that if they had not adopted this scheme, we should have had a *bellum servile*. It is well that we can express our meaning in a dead language. But if

wages had been allowed to regulate themselves, though we had adopted no workhouse or allowance systems, we should have had no *bellum servile*. These schemes were introduced when there was a declining population, and complaints of “stagnation in marriages,” when a great many hands were withdrawn by war, when labourers were scarce, and there was a great demand for them, when an unusual quantity of capital flowed into agriculture, and an unusual profit of stock arose from it, when of course wages would have risen higher than they did, and the poor rate have advanced in villages no faster than it did in towns, nor in the Southern provinces faster than it did in the Northern, and in Scotland, during the same period. We have had no *bellum servile*; but if this system should be perpetuated, and extended from county to county, from hundred to hundred, and now, as Lord J. Russell proposes, (taking a curious method to remedy the evil) from parish to parish, and from farm to farm, throughout England and Wales, we shall have in our villages a plantation system, colonial laws, hireling overseers, taskmasters, and bondmen. It is not possible, however, that this anomalous system should continue. In spite of the recommendations of the legislature, and the affection of the magistracy for it, this abscess, which has formed itself in the vitals of agricultural society, will come to its crisis. I do not know that we shall have a *bellum servile*, or what the Ger-

mans call a war of the peasantry, but the system will certainly break up, perhaps by arguments shaped and levelled to the comprehension of the vulgar. It will then terminate to the shame of the government, the confusion of the magistracy, and the injury of the farmer ; the gentry and yeomanry will lose not only the vassalage and bondage, but the attachment of that body which it is so much the interest and the honour of the gentry, the yeomanry, and the country, to retain.

A magistrate of this hundred states the following fact, and it is much to be regretted that he did not accompany or follow that statement with some explanation :—" It is true, there was very nearly an instance of insurrection which, by the timely interference, by the advice, and by the prompt attention of the magistracy, was effectually checked." Now I cannot speak of the state of other parts of the county, but I can of this at that time. In the year 1823, day wages varied from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 6d. and 1s. 8d. per day. I have given in a former publication, the earnings of the people of this parish during the year, which were, perhaps, in many cases, not much short of what they are at this moment. In 1823, flour was 1s. 6d. per stone ; meat 3d. to 4d. per lb. and butter 5d. In 1825, flour is 3s. per stone ; meat 7d. per lb. and butter 1s. 1d. and labour 1s. 8d. In 1823, there was nearly an insurrection, though every person in this parish was constantly employed. I asked many of the labourers at that time

why they had taken any part in the affair, and their reply was, that it was given out, "that if they went to the magistrates in a body, the magistrates and the farmers would be intimidated, and the allowance and the wages be raised." 'This too in a hundred where one magistrate tells us the magistrates did not interfere with wages, and another that there is no allowance system at all. I believe, moreover, that if ten labourers of the parish were examined, they would declare, that the time of the insurrection was the moment of their prosperity, and that they purchased more meat and comforts in that year than in almost any former or subsequent period. I am sure at least, that comparing their wages and the price of provisions that ought to be their evidence. This was indeed an unfounded alarm of insurrection, but it completely confirms Mr. Malthus's prediction, which he published twenty years ago. "When the vanity and mistaken benevolence of the government, and the higher classes of society, have, by a perpetual interference with the concerns of the lower classes, endeavoured to persuade them that all the good they enjoy is conferred upon them by their rulers and rich benefactors, it is natural that they should attribute all the evils which they suffer to the same sources, and patience under such circumstances cannot reasonably be expected. Though to avoid still greater evils, we may be allowed to repress their impatience by force, if it show itself in overt



acts, yet the impatience itself appears to be clearly justified in this case, and those are in a great degree answerable for its consequences, whose conduct has tended evidently to encourage it."

2. This leads me to notice the second innovation introduced by these schemes, laws, and regulations, viz. the incorporation of parishes and districts, which has broken up the parochial system, degraded the parish officers, and destroyed the ancient and simple police of the country. In examining the merits of any remedial statute it is usual to make the following enquiries:—How the law stood at the making of the act—what the mischief was for which the law did not provide, and what remedy the parliament has provided to cure the mischief? The original law was, that the overseers, with concurrence of the parishioners, should relieve the poor, and raise a rate for that purpose. The mischiefs complained of were, that overseers were chosen from a rank of persons not competent to the arduous duties of the office—that they were chosen *annually*, and that when they became acquainted with the business of their office, the office itself terminated. The remedy which the law has provided for these mischiefs is the office of guardians, chosen from each parish, from the same rank of life, and chosen *annually*. And because they could not superintend the concerns of their own parishes, which were considered too small for proper management, they were to ride 8 or 10 miles,

meet in a hundred house, and manage the concerns of other parishes of which they know nothing. Because, moreover, in one year, the parish officers could not become acquainted with the business of their small parishes, the business of whole hundreds is now often performed by one or two magistrates, by a graduated scale, or by a committee of clergymen, gentlemen, and farmers, who serve their office for *one calendar month*, in regular rotation, through the year. It was also objected to the overseers, that they had greatly abused their office, mismanaged their affairs, and kept their accounts in a disorderly manner. I have been at some pains to examine a great many old parish records, especially those of villages, and if there is one thing for which they are remarkable, I should say, it is the order and method in which they are kept. I may on a future occasion give some specimens of different dates.

I shall have occasion, in the following chapter, to give a table, exhibiting the poor rate of each parish in one of the largest incorporated districts in England, before and since the incorporation. To these accounts I will only add the opinion of two of the most eminent lawyers of the last century, and who were both of them well acquainted with country affairs, respecting the subdivision or incorporation of parishes and districts for the management of the poor. In the case of the King against Leigh (3 Term, Rep. 748), Lord Kenyon

observes, " It has been doubted by country gentlemen, whether the poor are better maintained in large or small districts, though the former has been said judicially in this court. In small divisions the officers are more attentive to their duty, and in the part of the country with which I am acquainted, the poor are better provided for in small districts. Therefore as the usage in this case coincides with our ideas on the policy, and as we are warranted by the adjudged cases on this point, we think it highly proper that the division of this parish, which has subsisted so long, should continue, and consequently that the order of sessions should be affirmed."

Buller J. said, " I entirely agree with my Lord Chief Justice that the greater care is taken of the poor in small than in large districts; and if in any case we were to find that it was formerly inconvenient to the parish at large to maintain their own poor jointly, though it were convenient for them to do so now, we would not assist them in overturning the old practice, for that would operate as a discouragement to the efforts of individuals to reduce the poor rates, which have succeeded in many small districts. I even go further, for though it should appear that a parish had enjoyed the benefit of the 43 Eliz. yet, if they could not now maintain their own poor jointly, we would permit them to divide themselves, provided there be such legal divisions in the parish as are capable of sup-

porting their own poor separately, under the provisions of the statute of Charles II." The other judges concurred in opinion.

3. We cannot fail to observe how these schemes, and laws, and regulations, have tended to introduce the principle of "pay" into the administration of charity. There are now a great number of officers with salaries, and overseers with salaries are generally recommended, and we begin to hear from various quarters a call for a stipendiary magistracy. That such must be the result of the present system, if persevered in, there can be no doubt. I, for one, sincerely regret the principle of pay, as it respects the administration of charity, and as it respects rural police, if the ancient courts were not trampled under foot, it is quite unnecessary. But the present system will infallibly lead to a paid magistracy, for people will naturally begin to calculate and compare the respective merits of the stipendiary magistrates of the potteries, and of the metropolis, and the rural magistracy. For instance—the hundred of Freebridge Lynn contains a population of about 10,000 souls, and there are four magistrates, thirty-three parishes, nearly as many clergymen, twice as many churchwardens, overseers, and constables, and yet who ever heard of the four magistrates of Union-hall, who preside over a population of 250,000, going through half the fatigue and business for which some of the rural magistracy lay such claim for

honour. In this account of labour, too, we must remember, that peace and order are not preserved with some half dozen police officers, but that all the petty officers of parishes, and the overseers, and the peasantry, infantry, and cavalry, are kept in constant motion. If the commander-in-chief will neglect the aid of the generals of division and brigade, of colonels of regiments, and captains of companies, and undertake in his own person all the duties of commissioned and non-commissioned officers, he will soon have his rank and file in confusion, and military discipline at an end. This, perhaps, is the history of our rural insurrections; but the chief thing to be regretted is, that what is called "country business" is become so irksome and disgusting, that many, perhaps most, of the leading country gentlemen, retire from it altogether. A gentleman of this county, and a landed proprietor of the first rank, assured me some time ago, that the whole thing was so disgusting, that he had the strongest inclination not only to retire from the magistracy, but from his residence upon his estate. But it is only necessary to read the evidence of magistrates, farmers, overseers, and clergy, before the house of commons, to be perfectly satisfied that the present system must be irksome and offensive to gentlemen of independent and honourable feelings.

But what is the effect of it upon the middle

ranks? We hear a great deal of the oppressive disposition of these ranks, and of their incapacity to manage their own affairs. I am not prepared to vindicate all that the farmers do or say; but the way in which we hear them spoken of is somewhat curious and singular. We see the increase of the wealth, knowledge, and reputation of the middle ranks in trade, commerce, and manufactures, and we are all admiration. We see numbers rising from the employments of trade to the rank of common councilmen, aldermen, and members of parliament. Tradesmen, manufacturers, merchants, have their servants, equipages, town and country houses, and we admire the wealth and prosperity of the country; we leave them to manage their own affairs, hire, employ, and pay their own servants, and to live as they please. But not so the farmers—they are too self indulgent. We agree for rent *free of all parochial charges*, compound for tithe *free of all parochial charges*, clamour for cheap corn and cheap provisions, and then most vigorously turn upon the cruel farmers, and demand of them to pay high rates and high wages, and to live frugally, and be charitable. We declare it in open day, that the gentry, clergy, and poor laws, are the only protection of the peasantry against their employers. It may be fairly questioned, whether this very system of “making the farmers maintain the poor,” as we call it, is not the real

cause of the mischief.\* Dr. Benjamin Franklin, who had a clear and happy insight into the relations of social life, writes in one of his pieces in the character of Arator “I am, he says, one of that class of people that feeds you all, and at present is abused by you all—in short, I am a farmer.” He thus speaks also of making the farmers maintain the poor: “A very good thing, you will say; but, I ask, why a partial tax? why laid on us farmers only? If it be a good thing, pray, Messieurs the public, take your share of it, by indemnifying us a little out of your public treasury. In doing a good thing there is both honour and pleasure—you are welcome to your share of both.” Allow to the middle ranks in agriculture the same discretion and freedom as you allow to the same ranks in every other department of the state; allow them to manage their own affairs without interruption, and the complaints of that class will soon cease. There may be, and indeed there must be, oppression

\* Perhaps the evils which have grown up in agricultural society cannot be better explained, nor the remedy for them more fully developed, than in the following observation of one of the deepest thinkers of antiquity:—“The events of time and chance will often give to some one of the constituent parts of a state, or to some particular magistracy, more than their due importance, and their proper weight. This alteration must be carefully watched, and whenever the balance inclines, whether on the side of the rich, the noble, or the populace, care must be taken to correct the preponderancy, and to strengthen *that intermediate portion* of the people which is always more stedfastly attached to the public welfare than either those who are elated by wealth, or those who are depressed by poverty.—*Aristotle, Pol. b. vii.*

under the present system. But perhaps, making due allowance for provocation and injury, they are the most forbearing of all masters, and may, under different circumstances, become, as they used to be, the most liberal.

I do not here speak of the effects of this system on agricultural labourers—first, in degrading their character, and then in depressing their wages, having adverted to this subject on a former, and intending to do so on a future occasion, but I shall conclude with Dr. Franklin's opinion on this point. "For my own part I am not so well satisfied of the goodness of this thing. I am for doing good to the poor, but I differ in opinion about the means. I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy *in* poverty, but in leading or driving them *out* of it. In my youth I travelled much, and I observed in different countries, that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer: and on the contrary, the less was done for them the more they did for themselves, and became richer. The day you passed that act you took away from before their eyes the greatest of all inducements to industry, frugality, and sobriety, by giving them a dependance on somewhat else than a careful accumulation during youth and health for support in age and sickness. Repeal that law and more will be done for their happiness by inuring them to provide for themselves,



than could be done by dividing all your estates among them. Excuse me, Messieurs the public, if upon this interesting subject I put you to the trouble of reading a little of *my* nonsense, I am sure I have lately read a great deal of yours." What would Dr. Franklin have said of all our modern improvements if he could speak thus of the venerated statute of Elizabeth, and of its effects upon the character of the people?

## CHAPTER IV.

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### FACTS.

#### *GRESSINGHALL HOUSE OF INDUSTRY.*

**T**HIS House of Industry is for the hundreds of Mitford and Launditch, in the county of Norfolk. There were fifty incorporated parishes attached to it. It adjoins the hundred of Freebridge Lynn, is in the centre of the county of Norfolk, and the population is almost exclusively employed in agriculture, and in the small trades connected with it. The act was obtained after much opposition in 1775, and the house was completed in 1777. The cost of the establishment was as follows:

	£.	s.	d.
Building the house .....	10,000	0	0
Furniture .....	1,600	0	0
Purchase of land .....	1,400	0	0
Farming Stock .....	200	0	0
Improving Farm .....	280	0	0
Printers' Bills .....	42	0	0
Sundry articles .....	860	0	0
Expence of obtaining the Act ..	1,060	6	11
	15,442	6	11

In 1795 the debt was reduced to £10,000, but in 1801 the debt still remained at £10,000, and the new act, which was in that year obtained, states that there was an additional debt to the treasurer of nearly four thousand pounds ; so that after the lapse of twenty-four years, and after liquidating at one period nearly £6000, the debt was nearly its original amount. In 1801 a separate act was obtained for the market town of East Dereham, the capital town of the district, and a new act for the remaining parishes. After 1801 the debt was liquidated by levies under the new act for that purpose, and in 1810 it was discharged. I believe, however, that the establishment is at this time in debt to the treasurer. On the whole, I conceive that, calculating principal and interest of money expended upon the establishment alone, (without calculating the cost of maintaining the poor) a sum not less than £50,000 or £60,000 has been expended upon this house of industry. The interest of this capital sum would be nearly equal to the whole amount of expenditure for the relief of the poor in the two hundreds previous to the incorporation of the parishes, if we add the necessary repairs, and the salaries of the respective officers.

The average amount of seven years' disbursements for the poor, before the institution was the quota fixed, to be furnished annually by each of the incorporated parishes. The whole sum thus pro-

duced from the quotas of the 50 parishes, amounted to £3965 18s. 1d. annually. It will of course be a most important part of our inquiry to exhibit the payment of each parish in poor rate at the time of the institution, and at the present time. We shall thus be able to ascertain what effect this institution has had upon the poor rate of the several parishes.

## MITFORD HUNDRED.

Towns' Names.	On an Average of 7 years, before 1775.			Poor Rate, 1821.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
Cranworth -	80	19	0	200	0	0
E. Dereham, with Dillington -	416	3	11	2127	12	0
Garveston -	93	14	0	279	12	0
Hardingham -	151	4	8	607	19	0
Hockering -	59	3	3	387	4	0
Letton -	36	6	2	68	7	0
Mattishall -	186	10	0	857	12	0
Mattishall Bergh -	37	1	6	120	8	0
Reymerstone -	37	9	4	363	5	0
Shipdham -	380	0	0	1273	0	0
South Bergh -	73	1	6	328	13	0
Thuxton -	38	6	6	89	9	0
E. Tuddenham -	78	0	2	234	5	0
N. Tuddenham -	77	5	10	436	17	0
Winberg -	22	0	4	211	3	0
Westfield -	21	12	8	157	16	0
Wood Rising -	39	16	10	164	2	0
Yaxham -	97	8	6	713	4	0
	1925	14	2	8621	7	0

## LAUNDITCH HUNDRED.

Towns' Names.	Sum Assessed, 1775.			Sums Assessed, 1821.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
Beeston -	119	15	9	926	13	0
Bectley - -	56	12	2	299	10	0
E. Bilney - -	32	10	0	176	17	0
Brisley - -	84	2	0	168	12	0
Colkirk - -	73	2	0	306	19	0
Great Dunham -	60	12	2	529	3	0
Little Dunham -	59	11	8	200	3	0
N. Elmham -	230	10	11	922	13	0
Great Fransham -	52	6	11	305	5	0
Little Fransham -	61	5	8	115	3	0
Gately - -	25	12	4	238	14	0
Gressenhall -	108	0	0	504	14	0
Hoe - -	53	2	11	175	18	0
Horningtoft -	54	16	1	336	16	0
Kempson - -	18	16	11	113	15	0
E. Lexham - -	10	2	8	143	13	0
W. Lexham - -	29	11	6	81	17	0
Litcham -	59	6	4	583	4	0
Longham -	48	2	2	265	7	0
Mileham - -	79	3	0	279	6	0
Oxwick cum Patchley	32	0	1	48	7	0
Rougham -	36	0	4	232	2	0
Scarning - -	144	0	4	734	8	0
Stanfield -	45	15	5	163	19	0
Swanton Morley -	127	5	8	778	12	0
Tittleshall cum Godwick - -	102	18	4	555	2	0
Weasenham St. Peter's	47	0	6	208	16	0
Weasenham All Saints	59	0	9	304	12	0
Wellingham -	10	16	9	57	19	0
Wendling - -	42	0	0	318	16	0
Whissonset -	61	7	5	264	11	0
Worthing - -	14	15	0	140	0	0
Total Launditch	2040	3	11	10,481	6	0
Total Mitford	1925	14	2	8,621	7	0
	3965	18	1	19,102	13	0

Thus it appears that at the time of the passing the act, the sum expended on the poor was £3965. 18s. 1d. The sum now expended (according to the last published return to parliament) was £19,102. 13s. but as the new act was obtained in 1801, it may perhaps illustrate the progress of the disease to state the expenditure of the four last quarters under the old act.

The following was the annual amount of expenditure for victuals to the house, and payments to the out poor :—

		<i>House Provisions.</i>			<i>Out Pensions.</i>		
		£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
From June 1777 to ditto 1778..	1215	11	2	$\frac{1}{2}$	354	10	7
1782 .....	1783..	1369	10	$6\frac{1}{4}$	317	5	4
1793 .....	1794..	1486	1	$11\frac{1}{4}$	615	18	6

The expences of the *quarter* ending December, 1800, were as follow :

	£.	s.	d.
House expences .....	1769	4	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Out pensions .....	2848	4	1
$\frac{1}{4}$ interest of £10,000 .....	125	0	0
	<u>£4742</u>	<u>8</u>	<u><math>2\frac{1}{2}</math></u>

Quarter ending Lady-day, 1801—

	£.	s.	d.
House expences .....	2120	8	$2\frac{1}{2}$
Out pensions .....	4555	15	$2\frac{1}{4}$
Officers .....	123	18	3
Interest of debt .....	125	0	0
	<u>£6925</u>	<u>1</u>	<u><math>7\frac{1}{4}</math></u>

## Midsummer, 1801—

	£.	s.	d.
House .....	1833	13	2½
Out pensions .....	3624	6	11½
Officers .....	143	9	9
Interest .....	125	0	0
Expencc of new act .....	558	6	0
	<hr/> £6284 15 11 <hr/>		

## Michaelmas, 1801—

	£.	s.	d.
House .....	1995	12	1
Out pensions .....	3945	2	3½
Interest of debt .....	125	0	0
Officers .....	123	17	3
	<hr/> £6189 11 7½ <hr/>		

So that it appears that in the year 1801, when the old act was repealed, and the town of East Dereham seperated from the corporation, and erected at an expence of more than £3000 a workhouse of its own, the out-goings of the corporation were as follows :—

	£.	s.	d.
House expences .....	7718	17	7½
Out pensions .....	14,973	8	6½
Interest and officers .....	1431	11	3
	<hr/> £24,123 17 5 <hr/>		

By the old act the poor were maintained at the joint expence of the parishes, but now each parish pays a fixed annual sum for the expence of the establishment ; and also so much per head for every

pauper which each parish may have in the house, and which is calculated by a monthly table.

At the first meeting after the passing of the new act, the costs, charges, and expences for supporting the house, and other buildings for the reception of the poor, keeping the same in repair, and for defraying the salaries and wages of the chaplain, treasurer, clerk, governor, and other officers, were duly estimated ; and at the same time the average number of poor sent from such respective parish, hamlet, and place within the said incorporated hundreds to, and maintained in the said house, for four years, commencing at Midsummer, 1796, together with all other circumstances relating to the situations of each respective parish, hamlet, and place were taken into consideration, in order to ascertain and fix, with as much equality and indifference as can be, the share and proportion which each parish is to contribute and pay for such expence.

Each parish was rated accordingly, and the annual sum raised by fixed quarterly payments for each parish from

	£.	s.	d.
Mitford hundred, was ..	204	6	0
Launditch .....	340	7	3
Total .....	£544	13	3

This sum was fixed as the necessary expences of the establishment, or as it has been sometimes



called, the machine. The out-goings were thus fixed :—

	£.	s.	d.
Chaplain .....	40	0	0
House surgeon .....	63	0	0
Clerk .....	42	0	0
Governor and wife .....	90	0	0
Shoemaker .....	15	12	0
Miller .....	15	12	0
Out surgeons .....	177	10	0
Repairs, & other incidental expenses	100	19	3
	<hr/>		
	£544	13	3
	<hr/>		

It appears that in 1809 the assessment was again altered—

	£.	s.	d.
For Mitford .....	244	6	0
Launditch .....	410	7	2
	<hr/>		
	£654	13	2
	<hr/>		

and the salaries, 1824, were as follows :—

	£.	s.	d.
Chaplain .....	40	0	0
House surgeon .....	55	0	0
Four out surgeons .....	271	10	0
Solicitor .....	21	0	0
Governor and matron .....	90	0	0
Committee clerk and school master	31	10	0
Miller .....	15	12	0
Servant .....	6	6	0
Repairs .....	120	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£650	18	0
	<hr/>		

<i>Years.</i>	<i>No. Paupers in House.</i>	<i>Burial.</i>	<i>Births. Legitimate. Illegitimate.</i>		
1795	571	89	23	11	12
6	507	59	20	7	13
7	454	37	8	4	4
8	426	31	15	6	9
9	427	42	19	9	10
1800	524	38	19	6	13
1	619	58	22	12	10
2	247	21	9	4	5
3	205	22	11	3	8
4	193	16	10	5	5
5	235	13	8	1	7
6	200	24	11	3	8
7	175	13	8	3	5
8	182	15	11	3	8
9	187	10	11	3	8
10	155	8	5	1	4
11	139	8	4	2	2
12	147	23	9	2	7
13	153	10	7	2	5
14	135	6	7	1	6
15	158	14	18	4	14
16	201	17	10	4	6
17	226	14	8	2	6
18	189	16	8	5	3
19	175	24	4	3	1
20	188	9	10	3	7
21	172	7	3	1	2
22	161	16	7	6	1
23	158	16	3	1	2
1824	157	13	5	1	4
			313	118	195

It is very difficult to obtain the expenditure for clothing, incidental expences, and the average cost of paupers for a series of years. Besides these details, though important, are insignificant, in comparison of an examination of the general principle, and moral and economical effects of these institu-

tions. In examining the allowance system, the amount of allowance is not the important matter of debate, but the principle and the effects of any scale of maintenance whatever, applied to the population. The object is not to impugn the managers of these institutions, but to shew that the institutions themselves have the most pernicious effects upon society. To withhold information of importance would be inconsistent with freedom of discussion ; but as I should detest, so I disclaim any intention of giving information for any other purpose than to disclose the real grounds of this important question. The following case, however, will illustrate some of these points, and at the same time shew the demoralizing and debasing effects of this system on agricultural labourers. I am much indebted for my information respecting these institutions to the directors and managers of them. I have indeed derived my information exclusively from those persons who superintend them, and are, I believe, as anxious to afford information as I could be to collect it. It is no small satisfaction in these investigations, that there is in the higher and middle classes no wish to conceal. I have found persons of all classes most anxious to afford all the information which it is in their power to give. On leaving the house of industry I found one of the directors in conversation with a pauper of the house, who attracted my attention, and I asked if he was in good health, and able to work.

He replied that he was quite well, and able to do any kind of husbandry work the gentlemen might choose to employ him in. The gentleman promised to send me the history of this man, and the cost he had been to the parish to which he belongs. The papers which contain all the particulars would fill many sheets, and as the letter which accompanied them will explain them sufficiently, I here insert it :

“ March 25, 1825.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I have been twice to the house of industry since I saw you, and herewith you will receive the papers relating to the pauper, which you wished to obtain. He went to the house in 1804, his family having been there three-quarters of a year before. There were three children—Ann, Robert, and James, with Elizabeth the wife, and Henry the father and husband, making, in all, five persons. The man’s age was 30, and he was in good health, Elizabeth, his wife, 45, Ann 8, Robert 7, and James 1 year. Ann went to service at Michael-1809, aged 13, and returned to the house at Midsummer, 1812, aged 16, with child, and the child was soon after born. Robert went to service at Michaelmas, 1812, and Ann went to service again at Midsummer, 1815. For James the parish paid £7, to bind him apprentice to a shoe-maker. Elizabeth, the *natural daughter* of Ann, has been within these few days sent to a farmer’s, in this

parish, as a servant. Her father was killed long ago, by a waggon passing over him. Ann is very *lately married*. Robert is a farming servant in this parish—James a shoemaker, at Norwich. Henry, the father of the family, is still in the house with his wife. I have made many efforts for the last ten years to get him out, but the farmers invariably said he was too lazy, and that it was of no use to take him from the house, for that he would not work. I determined to see what he already cost us, and you have the result. When I produced it at the parish meeting the farmers were thunder-struck, and begged to have him out directly. We have hired a house, and intend buying him some furniture. One of the farmers observed to me, ‘the rascal has had two hundred pounds of my money.’ The pauper is now 51 years of age. What makes this case so infamously bad is, that he has always been capable of earning his own living, and supporting his family; he has no fault but that he is *slow*. The following are the cost and charges since he went to the house, calculated from the books :

	£.	s.	d.
To support of the family from Michaelmas, 1803, to Christmas, 1824, (exclusive of earnings, to 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ years .....	577	7	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
Supposed expence of quarter ending Lady, 1825	7	0	0
4d. per head per week for mending clothes, shoes, &c. for each person .....	70	7	4
	<hr/> £654 14 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ <hr/>		

	£.	s.	d.
The interest and compound interest would	1335	11	5½
amount to .....			

The pauper sometimes goes out to harvest, and his wages, *as they tell me*, are put to the parish account. They have what are called rewards, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of their earnings I believe. The calculation is as correct as I can make it, and I know of no error—the pauper has never left the house, except once or twice for the harvest. He earns now 1s. 6d. per week, and has never earned more than 3s. I began the calculation of earnings, but have not had time to go through it in time for you.

I must mention also another case of a poor old industrious man, who was sent to this house because no one would take him as a lodger. His own son living in the parish, refused to receive him, because his pain was so acute that he could not refrain from moaning; and let him be sent away, saying, the house was built for him and such as him, although it broke the old man's heart to go, and he begged of me, as a last request, to be brought back to his native village to be buried there. The man brought up a large family, and was never chargeable to the parish till his dying illness. He was 80 years of age.

We have another man in this parish at this time who will not work, having five children. He takes the meal allowance, and gets more by play than by work. We intend taking two of his children

and putting them to a weaver, the parish paying something with them, and then we expect, as his allowance will be reduced, that we may manage him. At present it is quite impossible. The whole, or nearly the whole of his support, both for himself and family, is paid by the parish—his rent likewise.

I am, dear Sir, your's, &c.

A. B.

I think it unnecessary to say any thing of this picture of rural life, but such are the effects of fixing by law and government, “the bare maintenance of every individual.”

#### CASE II.

##### *HECKINGHAM HOUSE OF INDUSTRY.*

The hundreds of Loddon and Clavering, consisting of forty-one parishes, were incorporated by an act of the 4th Geo. 3d, and the house of industry was opened for the reception of paupers in the year 1767.

In 1765 the sum of £2000 was borrowed.

1766	3400
------	------

1767	1600
------	------

---

£7000
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This debt was paid off by different instalments, previously to June, 1787. This house was strictly managed for some time. The total rates fixed on the several parishes amounted to £2132 6s. 3d. annually, but after the debt was paid off they were

lowered to £1986. 1s. and some time afterwards to £1866.

But after 1795, the rates very much increased in that year, a fresh debt of £600 was borrowed, and subsequently £1000, all which sums were paid off previously to 1805.

*The following Table exhibits the Number of Paupers, Yearly Earnings, and Expences of the House, for six years previous to 1725 :*

Years.	No. in House.	Earnings.			Total Expenditure.		
		£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
1789	199	219	7	10	2230	11	8
1790	233	256	13	9 $\frac{3}{4}$	2324	10	5
1791	245	305	2	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	2223	11	11
1792	224	302	4	5	2047	2	6
1793	214	234	0	10	2094	10	8 $\frac{1}{2}$
1794	239	189	16	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	2261	4	11

*The following exhibits the same for the last seven years :*

1818	456	133	10	1	12,253	5	0
1819	406	113	8	0	5593	17	6
1820	378	172	16	9	5593	17	6
1821	404	186	4	3	5860	5	0
1822	398	210	11	6	5327	10	0
1823	384	193	18	8	6393	0	0
1824	484	162	1	0	6659	7	6

#### NUMBER OF ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN

	Born in different Parishes.	Born in the House.	Total.
1818	10	6	16
19	12	7	19
20	21	10	31
21	12	7	19
22	20	4	24
23	5	6	11
24	9	5	14
			134



It is supposed that the average number of children has been under 200 for the last seven years ; and by this statement it appears that there must be 100 illegitimate under seven years of age ; and supposing the children not to leave till 13 years of age, the greater part of the children must be illegitimate.

	SALARIES.	
	1818.	1824.
Chaplain .....	£ 40	£ 34 0
Surgeons .....	160	136 0
Governor .....	80	68 0
Clerk .....	45	42 10
Treasurer .....	No Salary	20 0
Baker .....	22	22 0

Many tables of the price of provisions, and of the cost of paupers, have been sent to me from this house, but this is a part of the subject which I do not sufficiently understand to go into it. The following observation is of some importance :—"The paupers at this time (1825) are employed, the men and boys in the cultivation of about twenty-five acres of land, upon a system of spade husbandry, and in the manufacture of sacks, barn cloths, &c. &c. for sale. The women and girls in sewing and knitting stockings for the poor in the house, and for sale. The tailors work ; shoemaking and mending, as also the making women's apparel, is done by the paupers in the house."

In 1782, the year before the passing of Mr. Gilbert's act, the directors and acting guardians of the poor of these hundreds published a very flatter-

ing account of this institution, with a list of the bye-laws, rules, and orders. In the preface to that tract they observe, “ when *general laws* are once established by the skill or ability of the first promoters of an institution, the public is in no danger of losing, at any future time, any of the advantages which a former zeal had promised, or a past vigilance had procured. For should that zeal hereafter abate, or that vigilance relax, the institution, by means of its general rules, remains like a *machine*, which, having its springs of motion within itself, will, with but an ordinary attention and only a common application, go on to perform without interruption, its accustomed functions, and to produce, without variation, its usual benefits.” This machine has, however, been frequently since its auspicious beginning out of order. In the year 1791, another publication respecting this house appeared from a special committee, which represented that the books of this house were kept in a very loose and disorderly manner, and recommending the directors to dismiss the governor. Since that time debts have been contracted, and immense sums expended. Within the last few years there has been a great deal of division and contention between the managers of this institution. For some years, as appears by the sums expended, the allowance system must have been united with the workhouse system ; but I have been informed that in this house of industry, the farmers and occupiers

of lands have obtained the entire direction and management of the institution. The gentlemen and magistrates who were formerly in the direction, have either been out-voted or have retired. The third party has been practically set aside, and the whole business left to the farmer and the labourer, the employer and the employed. The consequence has been that wages are not made up out of the rates; that the expenditure in rates has been greatly diminished; that the business of husbandry has been separated from the administration of the poor laws, and of course that wages have risen, and that the demand is for workmen, and not for work. While day labour is at this time 1s. 8d. per day in most parts of the county, and in many parts gangs of labourers are working for half that sum, in these hundreds labour is 2s. per day, and a gentleman lately told me that it was difficult to get labourers to do the work. Now I do not doubt that in effecting this transition from pauperism to free labour, there might be much to be regretted in the means employed. Incorporated houses of industry, with all their laws and bye-laws, certainly give to interested parties a *power* and a *purchase* over the labourers which is unfair and unjust; but the exercise of that power has produced results which must gratify the most humane, for it has set free the market of labour, and restored the paupers of that district to the condition of free labourers.

## CASE III.

## HUNDRED OF FOREHOE—WICKLEWOOD HOUSE.

The incorporation took place in 1777, under a private act passed in 1776.

Eleven thousand pounds were raised by way of tontine—viz. 110 shares at £100 per share. To pay 5 per cent. interest—shareholders to have benefit of survivorship—annual interest now paid £550. No fresh debt has been incurred *that now exists*.

There are twenty-three parishes. The following exhibits their respective assessments for *one quarter*, made on an average of the seven previous years :

	£.	s.	d.
1. Barnham Broom .....	16	11	0
2. Barford .....	20	12	2 $\frac{1}{4}$
3. Brandon Parva .....	13	18	8 $\frac{1}{4}$
4. Bawburgh .....	13	13	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
5. Bowthorp .....	6	5	0
6. Carleton Forehoe .....	12	6	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
7. Costessey .....	23	9	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
8. Colton .....	10	13	4
9. Crownthorp .....	7	15	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
10. Caston .....	2	2	2
11. Doeopham .....	18	17	6 $\frac{1}{4}$
12. Easton .....	17	3	6
13. Hingham .....	86	1	10 $\frac{3}{4}$
14. Hackford .....	10	17	6 $\frac{1}{4}$
15. Kimberly .....	8	10	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
16. Marlingford .....	5	3	3 $\frac{1}{4}$
17. Morley St. Peter .....	9	12	0 $\frac{1}{4}$
18. Morley St. Botolph .....	12	5	11
19. Runhall .....	13	18	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
20. Wyndham .....	247	6	0
21. Wickelwood .....	14	10	4
22. Wrampingham .....	14	12	0 $\frac{1}{4}$
23. Welborne .....	9	0	2

*One Quarter* .... £595    5    5 $\frac{1}{2}$

N. B.—The parish of Honingham, though in the hundred, is not incorporated with the above.

The original act has been amended two or three times. The principal amendment 1814. All the amendments for the purpose of enlarging the assessments.

#### OFFICERS AND SALARIES.

	£.	s.	d.
Chaplain .....	26	0	0
Surgeon—House and Parishes .....	105	0	0
Committee Clerk .....	50	0	0
Governor and Matron .....	80	0	0
Baker—6s. a week and his board .....			
Shoemaker 12s. a week when there— <i>no board</i>			
Tailor 1s. 6d. a day, and board when there ....			
No Schoolmaster			

*Extracts from the Books kept at Wicklewood House of Industry, relative to the Poor in the incorporated Hundred of Forehoe, in Norfolk.*

<i>Year ending at Mids.</i>	<i>Births in the House</i>	<i>Deaths in the House</i>	<i>Paupers in the House.</i>	<i>Out Relief.</i>	<i>Earnings by the Paupers.</i>	<i>Assessed on the Parishes.</i>
1778			200	<i>No regular account kept in these Years.</i>	£140 15 4½	£2981 1 10
1779	12	25	196		208 18 8½	2381 1 10
1780	8	33	202		179 18 0½	2381 1 10
1781	7	37	269		167 17 5½	2381 1 10
1782	11	58	258		226 1 10½	2381 1 10
1783	11	41	265		265 2 8	2381 1 10
1784	8	77	275		186 5 3¼	2560 4 2
1785	11	42	331		270 0 10½	2560 4 2
1786	14	12	334		425 2 9¼	2560 4 2
1787	15	41	334		563 9 6½	2560 4 2
1788	16	37	323		626 11 5½	2560 4 2
1789	13	40	278	£138 0 2½	532 19 2¼	2643 0 6½
1790	10	33	215	261 11 0½	471 4 8½	2891 9 7
1791	10	26	233	376 13 9½	390 12 0	2891 9 7
1792	11	27	205	436 3 8	436 15 5½	2891 9 7
1793	9	19	227	594 3 11	357 14 4½	2891 9 7
1794	8	23	235	595 6 6	366 0 9	2891 9 7
1795	11	39	261	756 16 2½	335 15 1	2891 9 7
1796	6	31	244	2363 12 11½	386 17 2½	3975 15 5½
1797	9	10	234	1131 7 8½	378 0 8	5421 10 0½
1798	9	23	217	1012 18 6	347 17 0½	3252 17 11
1799	11	11	233	913 3 8½	355 6 0½	3252 17 11
1800	13	35	334	3210 9 11	461 16 5½	6144 7 5½
1801	9	34	287	7459 9 4	555 8 9½	12650 4 0½
1802	11	21	185	3943 13 7½	435 18 3½	8312 19 11
1803	13	25	172	2361 18 9	354 19 6½	5240 15 2
1804	14	18	187	2096 5 1½	369 16 9	3795 0 10½
1805	11	11	248	3578 19 2	422 14 10½	6867 5 1½
1806	5	14	238	3143 2 2	414 7 7	6144 7 5½
1807	8	11	226	2700 8 10	366 18 2	5421 10 4
1808	12	29	210	2603 12 0	364 13 4½	4698 12 11½
1809	9	10	225	3823 10 7	383 14 3½	6505 16 3½
1810	4	18	207	3601 17 2	355 10 9¼	6505 16 0½
1811	13	14	198	3821 18 6½	361 12 11½	6867 4 10½
1812	4	12	205	3421 16 9	352 2 11	6505 16 3½
1813	8	8	209	4771 15 9	378 5 9½	8674 8 2½
1814	8	17	190	3389 19 8	331 3 4½	6505 16 3½
1815	6	15	193	2306 6 0	298 12 7	5421 10 4½
1816	7	12	238	2263 14 9	319 11 7½	5063 1 10
1817	7	12	268	5771 12 11	285 15 6	7916 11 7
1818	10	19	233	3439 6 10	330 7 8½	7228 14 1
1819	5	15	207	3102 2 2½	277 15 1	6505 16 8
1820	7	10	202	3159 2 4	260 18 6½	5421 10 8
1821	9	13	230	2904 19 1		5782 19 4
1822	6	13	234	2669 13 2½	290 15 9½	5782 19 4
1823	7	23	208	2476 2 2	280 18 5	5782 19 4
1824	15	16	198	2867 1 1½	272 0 4	5782 19 4

The number of children baptized from 1791 to 1824 is 300, of which number 111 were legitimate and 189 illegitimate.

'The assessments of the parishes are not the gross returns to parliament, but the monies expended on the poor.

The assessments of the parishes minus the sum paid for out door relief and interest, will give in each year the expence of the house.

These extracts of the births, deaths, number of paupers, and earnings, would shew that the management of this house is not neglected, while the number of illegitimate children and the gross expenditure as plainly prove that a good management cannot controul the inherent evils of the system.

#### CASE IV.

##### *MELTON AND BRINTON.*

Having given two cases of the larger incorporation, and one of a single hundred, which were incorporated by local acts, I take this case of two small villages situated in the hundred of Holt, which were united under Mr. Gilbert's act for the purpose of erecting a workhouse. Sir Edward Astley was, I believe, chairman of the committee of the House on Mr. Gilbert's bill, and took some interest in the success of that measure, from a persuasion that it would prove beneficial to the poor. He was a benefactor, and endowed this workhouse with a grant of land.

Melton and Brinton workhouse was instituted in 1783.

	£.	s.	d.
Cost of building and furnishing, &c. ....	753	14	8 $\frac{1}{4}$
Debt .....	700	0	0

The cost of maintaining the paupers from 1784 to 1824, a period of 40 years, in- cluding interest on the house .....	}	18,237	11	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
The average yearly cost for 40 years .....				
		455	18	9 $\frac{1}{2}$

The number of paupers in the house cannot be ascertained previously to 1818, when the numbers were—

		<i>No. Paupers.</i>		<i>Total.</i>	<i>Cost of Maintaining.</i>		
		<i>Brinton.</i>	<i>Melton.</i>		£.	s.	d.
1819	....	6	.... 10	.... 16	.... 290	0	5 $\frac{1}{4}$
20	....	7	.... 12	.... 19	.... 277	3	3 $\frac{1}{4}$
21	....	8	.... 10	.... 18	.... 252	2	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
22	....	1	.... 13	.... 14	.... 201	9	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
23	....	3	.... 10	.... 13	.... 177	10	3
24	....	3	.... 7	.... 10	.... 170	18	3

The number of bastards in the house at different times cannot be ascertained, but it is supposed that half the number of paupers are bastards.

The house has cost these parishes, on an average of 40 years, £455 per ann.—this sum however does not include all the rates of the parishes; they have been in some years £700. Now it appears by the last population returns, that the parish of Melton with Burgh contained 111 inhabitants, including 19 in the parish workhouse, and the establishment of Sir J. Astley, in the hall at Melton. There appear to be in this village only 15 families employed in agriculture, two in trade, and five other families. In the parish of Brinton there appear to be 18 families employed in agriculture,



16 in trade, and 11 other classes, comprising a population of 221. The total population of these villages was 332. Now I simply ask whether such an establishment, and such an expenditure, be necessary or expedient for two villages situated and circumstanced as these are; and whether such an establishment must not be a nuisance, and such an expenditure injurious to the inhabitants of all classes, as well as to the community at large.

## CASE V.

The parish of South Creak, in the hundred of Brothercross, has a workhouse under Gilbert's act, for its own inhabitants. The accounts of this parish go back to the time of Sir R. Walpole, and as they will shew the state of the parochial court, and the management of the poor at that time, I shall here insert the first year's account of expenditure, viz. from 1720 to 1721, with the forms and signatures that accompany it.

Disbursed by Mr. Edward Glover, overseer for the poor of the said parish, from April 10, 1720, to April 10, 1721, as follows:—Total £33. 15s. 2½d.

	£.	s.	d.
Received by town stock last year .....	6	14	5
Received of Robert Jeckell a year's rent of } town land .....	3	1	0
A year's rent of Rudham town land .....	2	4	0
Received by 8d. rate .....	25	19	8
<hr/>			
Received in all .....	37	19	1
Disbursed as above .....	33	15	2½
<hr/>			
Remain in town stock .....	4	3	10½

We nominate and choose overseers for the year ensuing,

Mr. EDWARD GLOVER,  
Mr. PHILIP HALL.

THOMAS DONNE, Vicar.  
EDMUND SKYPPIN,  
ROBERT GLOVER,  
ROBERT HAYCOCK.

April 12, 1721. Allowed till just cause be shewed to the contrary,

R. WALPOLE,  
F. HARE.

From 1720 to 1782 the parish accounts gradually increased to £200. Soon after the passing of Mr. Gilbert's act a workhouse was appointed, and within a year or two the rates doubled, and have gone on gradually increasing, till in 1818 they amounted to £1093. 19s. and 1821, £847. 13s.

By the population returns of 1821, it appears that this large village contained 728 inhabitants, and 168 families, of which 148 were employed in agriculture. I am informed by the overseers of this parish, that of these 148 families, 108 are labourers; and of these 68 belong to the parish of South Creak by the law of settlement, and 40 are resident, not belonging, but employed out of the parish in the neighbouring villages, which have an insufficient population. The average number of children in each family is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$ , or each family consists of  $4\frac{1}{2}$ . There are therefore 306 men,

women, and children dependant on the cultivation of the soil for their support. This parish contains, I believe, about 4000 acres of land; and one of the principal farmers informed me, that his expenditure for labour was about £1 per acre. So that there would be £4000 per ann. supplied by the cultivation of the soil, or £60 nearly for each family, exclusive of poor rate, or any charitable assistance.

This parish is situated in the hundred of Brothercross, which contains nine parishes. I suppose (though I have no accurate topographical account) that these parishes must contain from 15,000 to 20,000 acres of rich highly-cultivated land, a small market town, a sea port, and a small fishery. The entire population was 3766, and the poor rate, with all these means of employment, in 1820, was £4150. 14s. and in 1821, £3766. 9s.

The parishes of Burnham are situated in this hundred, and it is more than probable, that some of the heroes of the Nile have died in a state of pauperism in the very birth-place of Nelson himself. In 1821 the poor rate of Burnham Thorpe was forty shillings per head on the population. Such is the glory of the English poor laws!

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I shall only add to these cases of agricultural districts and villages a brief abstract of the accounts of the city of Norwich and of the borough of Great Yarmouth, which will enable us to observe the

comparative progress of pauperism in towns and villages. This point is of itself worthy of a separate discussion, but I can only notice a few points, and must withhold the general statement of items, which are however of great importance.

The population of Norwich was in

1786 .....	40,051
1811 .....	37,256
1821 .....	50,288

The poor rate for Norwich was in

	£.	s.	d.
1786 .....	20,761	5	1
1794 .....	23,971	8	2
1821 .....	*17,131	11	0
1823 .....	23,356	13	4

The present population is supposed to be nearly 60,000.

In 1786 the number of paupers in Workhouse was 1612

In 1823 ..... 459

An examination of the number of paupers and the expence of the workhouse establishment, and of other establishments in connection with it, would excite a strong suspicion of the inexpediency of the workhouse system even in Norwich. These few facts are however sufficient to shew that there is a very great difference in the administration of the law in towns and villages.

The population of Great Yarmouth was in the year

1784 .....	12,608
1794 .....	13,000
1821 .....	18,010

This is a parliamentary return. I suppose for the poor only

## The expenditure for the poor in

	£.	s.	d.
1784 .....	4356	8	5
1794 .....	4164	5	4
1821 .....	9584	6	11

The following sheets will shew the expenditure in 1794 and in 1824.

## RECEIPTS.

1794.	£.	s.	d.
By balance received ..	110	18	7
Rates .....	3428	14	0
Benevolences .....	1	12	0
Composition for bastards	176	1	0
Rents .....	2	17	0
Money reimbursed, } earnings, &c. ....}	441	2	9
	£4161	5	4

## DISBURSEMENTS.

	£.	s.	d.
Provisions for work- } house .....	1677	11	4½
Removals, out pen- } sions, &c. ....}	1117	6	9
Cloathing .....	279	11	11
Salaries .....	205	0	0
Repairs .....	193	19	6
Fuel .....	117	14	6
Special payments ....	486	10	2
Balance .....	86	11	1½
	£4164	5	4

## RECEIPTS.

1824.	£.	s.	d.
By balance received ..	83	7	11
Rates .....	7057	13	7
Benevolences .....	20	0	0
Composition for bastards	2	3	0
Rents .....	130	19	3
Earnings by employ- } ment of the poor ...}	1	9	3
Fines .....	250	0	0
Board for the hospital } children .....	265	2	10
Of sundry parishes in } repayment of relief to } their parishioners ...}	93	0	9
Monies repaid for ad- } vances to pensioners }			
Total ..	£7903	16	7

## DISBURSEMENTS.

	£.	s.	d.
Provisions for house ..	2073	19	10
Removals .....	178	9	3
Out-pensioners .....	2831	10	5
Cash advances for other } parishes in relief of } persons resident, but } not belonging .....	313	3	6
Cloathing .....	753	1	0
Salaries .....	330	6	0
Fuel .....	204	0	0
Special payments ....	1058	19	7
Balance .....	160	7	0
Total ..	£7903	16	7

The population of Yarmouth at this time is, I suppose, nearly 20,000. So that comparing the population and expenditure in 1794 and 1824, there appears to be no great increase of rates. At the same time it may be observed, that the expence of provisions, clothing, and fuel, is considerably

increased, though the price of provisions at Yarmouth in 1794 was equal to the price in 1823-24. Beef and mutton 5d. to 6d. and wheat £3. 15s. per quarter, and flour 2s. 6d. to 2s. 10d. per stone. The number of paupers in the house was 295 in 1794, and the number in 1824 was 268. It may be of some importance to state in this place, that in 1821 the population of Glasgow amounted to 147,043 persons. I do not know the amount expended in that year for the poor of Glasgow, but it was about £10,000. Dr. Chalmers has made an experiment in one of the poorest parishes of that city, in which, after rejecting the assessment of about £1400, and retaining only the collections at the churches, amounting to about £400, he has been enabled to relieve the poor of that parish, amounting to one-tenth of the whole population, and to endow parish schools with a considerable surplus of the £400. Dr. Chalmers removed from a Scotch village, where there is no assessment, to the large town of Glasgow, where there was a certain compulsory provision for the poor, and was immediately struck with the effect of it on the character of the population. In England the case is almost the reverse; for the pauperism of our towns, though great in comparison with the Scotch towns, is quite inconsiderable in comparison of the pauperism of our villages, in some of which the entire labouring population, men, women, and children, are paupers. I mention this case, which

Dr. Chalmers has published, because he attributes the success of his experiment to the introduction of a principle which is the very opposite to that which has been the cause of so much mischief in our villages. He ascribes his success to the principle of locality and subdivision, and our mischiefs have undoubtedly flowed from the incorporation of parishes and district regulations. The principle of subdivision is at this time encouraged by the Government in Scotland, and in the large towns of England, while the incorporating system is still sanctioned and extended in our agricultural districts, and may, *while Mr. Gilbert's act continues unrepealed*, be extended from time to time.

The foregoing statement of facts may be left without any mixture of explanation. They appear sufficient to establish a conviction that the work-house system and the law of maintenance, as applied to agricultural districts, require examination and revision. It would be an injustice, and perhaps a prejudice, in this inquiry, to infer from partial evidence the impolicy of all legal relief, but there seems abundant proof that this part of our poor law code is unrighteous in principle, and replete with mischief and absurdity. It must be confessed, however, that the history of the laws, and the manner and time of their introduction, conspire to shew that the original law stands on a foundation, not indeed altogether unquestionable,

but entirely distinct from that of our workhouse system and modern laws of maintenance.

There appears to be at this time the widest difference of opinion upon this important point of our domestic economy. Some recommend our poor laws as a blessing, and a panacea for the evils of society, while others denounce them as a curse most devoutly to be deprecated by civilized men. Such contrariety of opinion, entertained and expressed by the leading men of the country, gives to this subject a peculiar interest, and to the evidence which may be collected upon it, a character of universal importance. Inquiry and discussion will promote the most useful purposes, and contribute to form a just and settled public opinion respecting the merits of our poor laws. We may, perhaps, ascertain how far they have or have not interfered with the essential principles of distributive and commutative justice.

It is a satisfaction to find, from this review of the workhouse system in agricultural districts, that the patrons of it must be attached to it from habit, and not from interest or conviction. It is clear that these systems have been as wasteful as they have been unsuccessful and immoral. They have been the occasions of infinite mischiefs, which are, however, to be ascribed rather to the erroneous principle on which they are founded, than to the evil intentions, or even the indiscretions of the managers and directors of them. There has been



unquestionable, and even avowed fraud in some of the underling actors, instigated often by interested litigants ; but the gentlemen who administer these laws of maintenance, with or without the assistance of a workhouse, have acted from motives as virtuous as those benevolent men did who promoted their primary adoption. Their object has been to use the influence with which they imagined their rank or office invested them, for the protection of their inferiors, and to extend the shield of power over the weaker party. There is no question as to their motives in general ; there is a minor question as to the lawfulness of the means in many cases employed, but the important enquiry is into the *policy* of this law of maintenance, and all its complicated machinery. The question is, whether such regulations are or ever have been necessary to secure, as some compute, one half, and others one-third of the population from starving—whether they have been an offensive goad to the farmer, and consequently a galling yoke on the neck of the labourer—whether they have degraded and disunited the higher, the middle, and the lower ranks in agricultural society.

The magistrates are the last men who could (unless they were under some strong delusion,) train their minds to fix a “ minimum, or modicum, or bare maintenance of the individual ;” or as a magistrate in one of his epistles interprets it, “ a stint,” for those persons who live by the sweat of

their brow. They are the last men who would dole out, in charity, by law, and in scanty measure, that to which the labourer has a natural, and, I will say, a Christian right to receive in full measure as the honest reward of his virtuous toil. It will afford satisfaction to these and to all benevolent men to know, that such a system of unrighteousness is unnecessary, and that the removal of it will tend to raise the relative price of wages, to cheapen provisions, and to better the condition of the labouring classes. The parliamentary returns shew that in the villages with which many of the magistrates are connected, the poor rate is unusually high in proportion to the population. Their motives, therefore, are perfectly disinterested—they do to themselves as they do to others, and a firm persuasion of this has induced me to enter upon and continue this discussion with greater freedom and less reluctance.

In examining workhouses, my object has not been to investigate the diet, clothing, and order of these abodes of vice and wretchedness, because the principle appears to be the first point worthy of reconsideration. I am informed, however, on the authority of a most experienced and benevolent magistrate of the metropolis, that many of the workhouses and farming houses for the poor in and about London, are in a very neglected and shocking condition. This perhaps is the natural effect of consigning the poor to such poor laws

In the country, workhouses and poor-houses, those stranded hulks, have spread a most pestilential infection among the peasantry. The account of bastards in all these establishments is quite sufficient to stamp their immoral tendency, and no one of common feeling can witness, without regret, such immense sums diverted from the employment and reward of industry, to the encouragement of idleness, vice, and misery.

The law of maintenance has been very generally extended over the Eastern districts of England. In the maps of the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, most of the estates of the nobility and ancient families appear to be embellished with a neighbouring workhouse. I will venture to assert, however, that there is not a nobleman and gentleman who has not had reason to suspect the policy of these establishments. Many certainly regard them as nuisances to their neighbourhood, their property, and their country. Our County Member, Mr. Coke, has set a laudable example to country gentlemen in abolishing the workhouse upon his estate at Holkham. If the law of maintenance were abandoned, we should soon see this example generally followed, and the old, happy, independent village-system restored. The Hon. Colonel Wodehouse, the Lieutenant of this county, has just advertised for sale two of our houses of correction, and we may hope soon to see our houses of industry, which have been the great

seminaries of crime and the feeders of our houses of correction, advertised for sale also, or converted to more useful and benevolent purposes. These are the dawnings of a happier day, and there are no real obstacles to further improvements. This is a question not tinged with party feelings, for men of all parties have been too much involved in it. There is also no physical difficulty in the way of a return to the ancient practice, and it seems difficult to conceive what motives, but indolence, and humane but unfounded fears, can induce the magistracy to adhere to regulations, which are condemned from one end of the country to the other, and which are licences to fraud, bounties to crime, and restrictions on the industry and wages of the labourer. Let the rural magistracy be persuaded or compelled to retire from all interference in the business of agriculture; let master and servant make their bargain without the intervention, direct or indirect, of a law or scale of maintenance, and we shall hear no more complaints of a degraded peasantry and oppressive farmers.





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